AN ESSAY

ON THE

CHARACTER

OF THE

APOSTLES AND EVANGELISTS:

DESIGNED TO PROVE THAT THEY WERE NOT

ENTHUSIASTS;

CONTAINING THE

SUBSTANCE OF SEVERAL DISCOURSES,

DELIVERED IN THE

CHAPEL OF TRINITY-COLLEGE, *DUBLIN*,

BY THE

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"*Paul said, I am not mad, most noble Festus, but speak the*
"*words of truth and soberness.*—Acts xxv. 26.

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PREFACE.

THAT Chriſtianity was founded on enthuſiaſm, was one of the earlieſt imputations thrown upon it. The politicians and philoſophers of the Heathen world regarded the ſteadineſs with which the primitive Chriſtians ſuſtained perſecution, and the zeal they diſplayed in making proſelytes, as certain proofs of obſtinate fanaticiſm; and they conceived that the faith required as eſſential to the Chriſtian profeſſion was founded on blind credulity; diſdaining to examine the doctrines, or weigh the evidence of an upſtart Jewiſh ſect, they ſatisfied themſelves with ſuch diſtant views, and ſuch ſuperficial objections as theſe, and too frequently diſmiſſed the religion of the goſpel as a ſordid and groſs ſuperſtition, unworthy the attention of a philoſophic mind. We find the antient apologiſts complaining of this proceeding, as moſt uncandid and irrational, and ſurely with good cauſe. "Some (ſays [a] Tertullian) look upon it as "madneſs, that when we might ſacrifice at the mo-"ment and depart uninjured, retaining in our mind "a fixed reſolution to continue firm to our religion,

[a] Tertulliani Apologeticus, cap. xxvii. edit. Havercampi, Lugduni, 1718, p. 259.

" we ſhould prefer our obſtinacy to our lives;" and in the concluſion of his apology, " [b] That, ſays he, " which you call madneſs and deſpair in us, are the " very actions which, under virtue's ſtandard, lift up " your ſons to fame and glory, and emblazon them " to future ages."—He then adduces the examples of Mutius Scævola, Regulus, the ſtoick Zeno, and the Lacedemonian youths, with ſome others, and he proceeds, " Not one of theſe contemners of death " and cruelty, in its ſeveral ſhapes, have had their " actions ſullied with the imputation of madneſs and " deſpair. A man ſhall ſuffer with honour for his " country, for the empire, for a friend, what he is " not tolerated to ſuffer for his God. Strange! that " you ſhould look on the patience of Chriſtians, as " ſuch, as an inglorious thing, and yet for the per- " ſons I have mentioned, caſt ſtatues and adorn " figures with inſcriptions and magnificent titles, " to perpetuate the memory of their actions to eter- " nity—to ſuch an eternity as monuments can be- " ſtow, and by this means give them a kind of re- " ſurrection from the dead; on the contrary, he " who expects a real reſurrection, and in hopes of " this ſuffers for the word of God, ſhall paſs among " you for a ſot and a madman." And in the next paragraph he ſtates, " That which you reproach in " us as ſtubbornneſs, has been the moſt inſtructive

[b] Ib. p. 429. I have here adopted Reeves's Tranſlation, which, though ſometimes vulgar, is here ſpirited and faithful. Vid. Reeves's Apologies, vol. 1, p. 296.

" miſtreſs

" miſtreſs in proſelyting the world; for who has not
" been ſtruck with the ſight of what you call ſtub-
" bornneſs, and from thence been puſhed on to look
" into the reality and reaſon of it; and who ever look-
" ed well into our religion but came over to it, and
" who ever came over to it, but was ready to ſuffer
" for it, to purchaſe the favour of God, and obtain
" the pardon of all his ſins, though at the price of
" his blood, for martyrdom is ſure of mercy."

Thus in the [c] Octavius of Minucius Felix, Cæcilius, the advocate for idolatry, is introduced as reproaching the Chriſtians with being "a col-
" lection of fools only and credulous women, who
" by the weakneſs of their ſex lie faireſt for deluſion."
Celſus urged the ſame objection; he adviſes, ſays [d] Origen, "that we ſhould adopt opinions following
" the guidance of reaſon, ſince every deception
" ariſes from men not being thus diſpoſed; and he
" compares ſuch as believe without reaſon, to thoſe
" who are delighted with obſervers of omens, and
" jugglers, with magicians and bacchanalians, and with
" the viſions of Hecate, and of other dæmons, for
" by ſuch means artful men working on the ſimpli-
" city of thoſe who are deceived, lead them which

[c] Vid. Editionem Ouzeli, 4to. Lugduni, 1652, p. 8. Reeves's Apologies, vol. 2, p. 42.

[d] Origen Contra Celſum, p. 8; in fine, Spencer's Edition, Cambridge, 1677, or Origenis Opera Studio Caroli Delarue, Paris, 1733, vol. 1, p. 327.

" way they will, and this is the caſe among Chriſ-
" tians: for, (ſays Celſus) ſome of them do not
" chooſe to give or receive a reaſon for their faith,
" but employ this maxim—*do not enquire but believe,*
" *and your faith will ſave you;* and this, *the wiſdom*
" *of the world is evil, but folly is good.*" In this paſſage we diſcover the ingenuity of the ſophiſt miſ-quoting the ſcripture he wiſhes to miſrepreſent; and in other [e] paſſages he compares the " appearances of
" our Lord, after his reſurrection, to vulgar ſpectres
" and viſions." Thus alſo Euſebius, in the [f] preface to his demonſtration of the truth of the goſpel, " This work ſhould be acceptable to the Greeks, if
" they would be reaſonable, from the wonderful
" foreknowledge of futurity, and the accompliſh-
" ment of events, according to predictions: thus
" at once ſhewing the divinity and certainty of the
" truth with us, and ſtopping the mouths of the
" patrons of falſehood by a rational proof, which
" theſe calumniators contend we cannot ſupply,
" maintaining every day, in their diſputes with us,
" with their utmoſt ſtrength, and inſiſting on this
" accuſation, that we are able to eſtabliſh nothing

[e] Vid. Ibid. p. 98—354 and 355. Vid. in anſwer. Infra, chap. 1. ſect. 5.

[f] Vid. this preface firſt printed by Fabricius in Greek and Latin, and prefixed to his Delectus Argumentorum, and Syllabus Scriptorum qui Veritatem Religionis Chriſtianæ Aſſeruere. Hamburgi, 1725, p. 8 and 9. The ſame aſſertion is repeated, chap. i. Vid. Euſeb. Præp. Evangel. Tranſlated by Vigerus. Paris, 1628.

" by

" by proof, but require thoſe who come to us to de-
" pend on faith alone."

The advocates of modern infidelity have not failed to revive this accuſation againſt Chriſtianity, and to ſupport it with their utmoſt ingenuity. Lord [s] Shafteſbury opens his works with a letter on enthuſiaſm; and after remarking, that the blood of the martyrs was the ſeed of the church, he ludicrouſly obſerves how much more than " heathenifhly cruel are " thoſe tolerating Engliſhmen, for not contented with " denying the propheſying enthuſiaſts of our days the " honours of a perſecution, we have delivered them " over to the cruelleſt contempt in the world. I am " told for certain that they are at this time the ſubject " of a choice droll or puppet ſhew at Bartlemy Fair; " and while Bartlemy Fair is in poſſeſſion of this " priviledge I dare ſtand ſurety to our national " church, that no ſect of enthuſiaſts, no new ven-" ders of prophecy or miracles, ſhall ever get the " ſtart, or put her to the trouble of trying her " ſtrength with them in any caſe." So far well; but the true object of his Lordſhip in theſe obſerva-tions ſoon diſcovers itſelf. " I never heard, ſays he, " that the antient Heathens were ſo well adviſed in " their ill purpoſe of ſuppreſſing the Chriſtian reli-" gion in its firſt riſe, as to make uſe, at any time, " of this Bartlemy Fair method. But this I am

[s] Shafteſbury Characteriſtics, vol. 1, p. 27, 28, 6 edit. 1737.

" perſuaded

" perſuaded of, that had the truth of the goſpel " been any way ſurmountable, they would have bid " fairer for ſilencing it, if they had choſen to bring " our primitive founders upon the ſtage in a plea- " ſanter way than that of bear-ſkins and pitched " barrels." He proceeds with more in the ſame ſtrain, inſinuating, that the ill ſucceſs of the Jews, in not rooting out Chriſtianity at its firſt original, aroſe from their being " too dull and cloudy a people " to exerciſe raillery on religious opinions, &c." It cannot but be painful to a Chriſtian mind to dwell on ſuch paſſages as this. This noble Lord made ridicule the teſt of truth; to employ reaſon ſuited not his taſte or his cauſe; in another place he tells us of " this pro- " pheſying ſect, who maintained that the antient " prophets had the ſpirit upon them under extacy, " with divers ſtrange geſtures of body, demon- " ſtrating them madmen or enthuſiaſts, as appears " evidently from the inſtances of Balaam, Saul, " David, &c. and who proceeded to juſtify this by the " practice of the apoſtolic times, and by the regula- " tions which the apoſtle himſelf applies to theſe " ſeemingly irregular gifts, ſo frequent and ordinary " (as our author pretends) in the primitive church, " on the firſt riſe and ſpreading of Chriſtianity;" and he aſſures us, " that he had ſeen this gentleman " under an agitation, as they call it, uttering pro- " phecy in a pompous Latin ſtile, of which, out of " his extacy, it ſeems he is wholly incapable." Whether his Lordſhip meant this *aſſertion* ſhould

" paſs

pass for a *jest*, I will not here pretend to determine; but that he introduced it to discredit the gift of tongues, with which scripture declares the apostles were endowed, will not, I presume, be denied. But objections such as this, which this celebrated writer thought fit only to insinuate, more hardy infidels have not hesitated to avow.

Mr. [h] Morgan, who distinguished himself by the title of the Moral Philosopher, assaults the character of St. Paul with peculiar virulence. The vision spoken of in the 2d Epistle to the Corinthians, chap. xii. "is, in this "writer's opinion, an evident [i] mark of enthusiasm, or "there are no marks of it in the world." And again he tells us, "this saint had too much heat to reason "coolly, and too great a crowd of tumultuous ideas "to range them in good discipline, as the incohe- "rence of his writings, the sudden change of sub- "jects, and darkness of expression shew, he was too "full of allusions, types and figures, to consider "rightly of realities. And against Christianity in general he advances the same charge. "If Christi- "anity be not essentially enthusiasm, wherein does, "the essence of Christianity consist? And again, "if Christianity teaches to believe and act contrary

[h] Morgan's Character of St. Paul examined, p. 45 and 51.

[i] Vid. in answer, infra, ch. v. throughout, but particularly section the 3d. Also, Lord Lyttleton on the Conversion of St. Paul.

"to

" to nature, is it not enthuſiaſm [k] ?" That it does, this author attempts to prove, both by the ſpeculative and the moral doctrines of the goſpel.

Theſe charges which had been brought forward againſt the goſpel, irregularly and immethodically, were collected and arranged by another labourer in the cauſe of infidelity, who, under the ſemblance of a friend to Chriſtianity, undertook to prove " that " it was *not founded on argument*, but faith alone; " and that the only means of coming at the know- " ledge of divine truths, is by a conſtant and parti- " cular revelation, imparted ſeparately and ſuperna- " turally to every individual." In the courſe of his reaſoning on this ſubject, this author does not heſitate to aſſert, " that our [l] Saviour did not lay the argu- " ments and proofs of his miſſion before his diſci- " ples, nor give them time to conſider [m] calmly of " their force, and liberty to determine thereon as " their reaſon ſhould direct them: nay, he goes " ſo far as to aſſert, that [n] Chriſt had no intention to " prove his own truth and character by his miracles, " and that he was always remarkably upon the " reſerve in that reſpect [o] wherever he happened " amongſt unbelieving company, and took particu- " lar care to prevent their coming to public

[k] Vid. in anſwer, c. vi. of the following work.
[l] Chriſtianity, not founded on Argument, p. 36.
[m] Vid. Infra, p. 9—13, in confutation of this.
[n] Vid. Infra, p. 48. in confutation of this.
[o] Vid. Infra, chap. i ſect. 3, p. 29 to 31.

" notice,

" notice, by dismissing most of the company and " attendants before he began to proceed to the ope- " ration, and that he would not suffer his grateful " patients to proclaim the benefits they had received, " but enjoined them the strictest silence. *Tell no* " *man*, was generally the charge." And again, " [p] that our Saviour would not work his miracles " without stipulating constantly before-hand for pre- " vious confidence and persuasion—*believe you that* " *I am able to do this*, is the language of the gospel." He even [q] asserts, " that *whenever* we find these " favours conferred, it was still perceiving that the " [r] patient hath faith to be healed. He imputes the " [s] conversion of the apostles to an internal and irre- " sistible impulse, without the help of reason or " evidence; and says, that when at our Lord's call " [t] St. Matthew forsook all and followed him, it " would seem strange, humanly considered, that he " should thus precipitately desert a beneficial em- " ployment for he knew not whom," and, as he insi- nuates, they were converted without evidence, he also states, that they converted others in the same manner. [u] They too (we are told) tread perpetually

[p] Vid. Infra, p. 29 to 31, and the references in the Appendix.

[q] P. 49, 50, of Christianity not founded on Argument. In confutation of this, Vid. Infra, p. 18 to 21.

[r] Vid. Infra, p. 15 to 18, and the Appendix.

[s] Vid. Infra, the entire first chapter, in answer to this.

[t] Vid. Infra, p. 65.

[u] Ib. p. 38 and 39, in answer. Vid. Infra, the entire second chapter, particularly section 1 and 4.

in

in their Master's steps; "they laid not the arguments "and proofs of their mission before their disciples, "but insisted constantly on the ready acknowledge- "ment of their doctrines, without any concession of "time for doubt or deliberation.—Of the terms of the "covenant, one declaration was often thought suffi- "cient.—Not to accept them, was to reject them; and "the least standing off gave up the unbeliever to repro- "bation."—For conveying deliberate and rational in- struction, he tells us the apostles were ill qualified; "they had neither leisure nor qualifications for such a "method; they could have *no time to spare*, if they "were so disposed; their commission required them "to keep stirring; they could not afford to attend to "impertinent queries, and lose their precious mo- "ments in controversies, and therefore it was abso- "lutely requisite, from their circumstances, that "their hearers should come in at a short warning, "to snatch the critical opportunity; that they should "be expeditious in their motions, and comply "without the least hesitation."

Such are the general outlines of this author's plan, and if his facts were true his inference would be undoubtedly well-founded; but I am compelled by the force of truth, combined with the interest of religion, to assert (what I think the following work will prove) that his statement of facts is *untrue*, founded on a gross misrepresentation of the gospel history; and I have quoted his assertions to enable my readers to compare

compare them with the ſtatements of the following work, and with the ſcripture itſelf, that they may thence learn diffidence and caution, when ſtudying the writings of the adverſaries to Chriſtianity, and not without a due enquiry rely on the ſtrongeſt aſſertions as to the plaineſt facts, when irreligion and ſophiſtry direct the pen.

It is not my intention to detain my reader, by enumerating the various grounds of doubt and objection advanced on this ſubject, by Collins and Woolſton, Chubb and Bolingbroke. Theſe writers, as well as thoſe, whoſe objections I have quoted, have been indeed ſo fairly and fully anſwered, that it might have been hoped this objection would not again have been brought forward; but at this time, which unhappily may be characterized as peculiarly productive of levity, ſcepticiſm and profaneneſs, there is no objection to the goſpel, however obſolete and plainly refuted, which has not been revived with zeal and preſſed with confidence. Nor is this difficult to account for. When the ſcriptures are leaſt ſtudied, objections againſt them will ever appear moſt plauſible, and where the reſtraints of the divine law are leaſt regarded, its evidence will always be attacked with moſt zeal and moſt ſucceſs. Even ignorance itſelf will encreaſe the confidence of the objector; for in every extenſive ſcheme, ſupported by

* Ib. p. 38, 39. Vid. Infra, chap. ii. ſect. 5.

hiſtorical

hiſtorical evidence, doubts and difficulties float upon the ſurface, their ſolutions cannot be found without a deeper ſearch, and the exerciſe of ſober enquiry and patient attention. To ſuperficial enquirers every objection is new, and the anſwer to every objection is unknown: hence old difficulties are revived when their ſolutions are forgotten, and the writers who diſcuſſed them, ſleep undiſturbed in the deepeſt receſſes of our libraries. Thus it has fared with the ſubject of the following eſſay: Monſieur [7] Boulanger, whoſe works are diſtinguiſhed with the title of the Philoſophic Library, and were publiſhed from the Philoſophic Preſs in Switzerland in 1791, has employed one volume in unmaſking (as he terms it) Chriſtianity, and another, in a critical examination of St. Paul, and has retailed every objection of the Engliſh Deiſtical writers with the fulleſt confidence, without once deigning to notice any of the anſwers given to them; amongſt theſe, that of enthuſiaſm holds a diſtinguiſhed place. A few extracts will ſhew the warmth of this writer's zeal, the unreſtrained freedom and wide extent of his aſſertions. In his preface he tells us, "that wherever we turn our obſervation we ſee the ſtudy of the objects moſt important for man totally neglected. Morality, under which I comprehend the ſcience of policy, is almoſt totally neglected in European education;

[7] Boulanger, tome 7, p. 22, 23, 24. Vid. in anſwer, if indeed it requires an anſwer, infra, the third and ſixth chapter. I have been careful to tranſlate this author literally.

Engliſh

" the only morality which is taught to Chriſtians is
" that enthuſiaſtic, impracticable, contradictory, un-
" certain morality, which we ſee contained in the
" goſpel, which is only fitted (as I believe I have
" proved) to degrade the ſpirit, to render virtue
" hateful, to form abject ſlaves, to break the ſpring
" of the ſoul, or, if it is implanted in warm tempers,
" it produces nothing but fanatics capable of over-
" turning the foundations of ſociety. Yet in ſpite
" of the inutility, and the perverſeneſs of that mora-
" lity in which Chriſtianity trains men, its defenders
" preſume to tell us, that without religion one can-
" not preſerve morals; but what is it to preſerve
" good morals in the language of Chriſtians? It is to
" *pray without ceaſing*, to frequent churches, to do
" penance, to live in abſtraction and retirement.
" What good can reſult to ſociety from ſuch practices
" as theſe, which one can obſerve without having
" the ſhadow of virtue? If morals of this kind lead
" to heaven, they are moſt uſeleſs upon earth. If
" theſe are virtues, we muſt admit that without religi-
" on it is impoſſible to preſerve virtue; but, on the other
" hand, one may obſerve ſtrictly every thing which
" Chriſtianity recommends, without having any
" one of thoſe virtues which reaſon points out to us
" as neceſſary to ſuſtain political ſocieties. We muſt
" therefore carefully diſtinguiſh religious morality
" from ſocial morality; the firſt makes ſaints, the
" other citizens: the one renders men uſeleſs, or even
" miſchievous, to the world; the other ought to have

" for

" for its object to form for ſociety uſeful, active " members capable of ſerving it, who may fulfil the " duties of huſbands and fathers, of friends, and aſſo- " ciates, however different their metaphyſical opini- " ons may be, which, whatever theology may ſay, " are much leſs certain than the invariable rules of " good ſenſe.

In another [z] place he tells us, that " it is impoſſi- " ble to follow the precepts of a reaſonable morality, " under a religion which makes a merit of zeal, of " enthuſiaſm, of fanaticiſm the moſt deſtructive; he " attributes to Chriſtianity, perſecution, intolerance, " fomenting ſedition and regicide in favour of religi- " on. [a] To *love our neighbour as ourſelves*—to *love* " *our enemies*—to *reſiſt not evil*—all theſe he attri- " butes to fanaticiſm. [b] It may be aſſerted, ſays he, " in general, that fanaticiſm and enthuſiaſm are the " foundation of the morality of Chriſt.—The virtues " which he recommends tend to iſolate men from " each other, to plunge them into a gloomy humour, " to render them pernicious to their fellow-crea- " tures." Faith and hope he ridicules, charity he pronounces difficult, if not impoſſible, in Chriſtianity. Chriſtian humility is, according to [c] him, " only pro-

[z] Boulanger, tome 7, p. 193 to 203.
[a] Ib. 215 to 221.
[b] Vid. Ib. p. 222 to 238.
[c] Vid. Ib. p. 240.

" per

" per to degrade man, to debaſe him in his own " eyes, to ſtifle all deſire of rendering himſelf uſeful to " ſociety, &c." In another place he tells us, that it is evident that in Chriſtianity " [d] marriage is regarded " as a ſtate of imperfection." Prayer,—Reſt on ſabbaths, and feſtivals, fall under his ſevereſt ridicule. Such is the pictureth is writer has drawn of Chriſtian morality. We are able to trace in it ſome ideas which may have been ſuggeſted by the celibacy of the papal clergy, the ſolitude and rigour of monaſtic life, and the extravagance of ſome ſects of fanatics, at ſome few places, and for ſhort periods; but how wonderfully diſtorted and overcharged is the portraiture even of thoſe, and what have they to do with the morality of the goſpel?—Yet in other places the picture is drawn in colours ſtill more hideous. But I have quoted enough to give my readers a ſpecimen of the turn of thought of writers ſuch as this, ſufficient, I ſhould hope, to induce them to weigh their opinions and their proofs with great care, before they adopt them as juſt and concluſive, and to compare their repreſentations accurately with the originals which they pretend to deſcribe, before they ſuppoſe a reſemblance.—After this view of Chriſtian morality we are not to wonder that the ſame writer ſpeaks in the ſame ſtile of the firſt teachers of Chriſtianity. Of the Jews, he ſays, [e] that " the Jew was

[d] Boulanger, tome 7, p. 240

[e] Vid. Ib p. 59.

" always

" always the victim, and the dupe of his inſpired " teachers, and that in his greateſt miſeries his pre- " ſumptuous fanaticiſm, his ſenſeleſs hopes, his cre- " dulity, which could not be tired out, ſuſtained " him againſt the ſtrokes of fortune; in fine, con- " quered with the reſt of the world, Judæa ſubmit- " ted to the Roman yoke. Then, chagrined by " misfortune, the Jew became more ſeditious, more " fanatical, and more blind; proud of the promiſes " of his God, and full of confidence in thoſe ora- " cles which announced to him a ſtate of happineſs " he never has enjoyed, encouraged by enthuſiaſts " or impoſtors, who inceſſantly ſported with its cre- " dulity, the [f] Jewiſh nation always looked for a " Meſſiah, a monarch, a deliverer, who ſhould diſ- " engage it from the yoke under which it groaned, " and exalt it to reign over all the nations of the " univerſe."

Speaking of the diſciples of our Lord, he ſays, " [g] theſe men, either impoſtors or dupes, gave the " moſt ſtriking teſtimony of his power, and pretend- " ed that his miſſion was proved by miracles without " number." And afterwards, [h] " Paul, the moſt am-

[f] This is certainly true; how then happened it that Chriſt ſhould be the only perſon who, claiming the character of the the Meſſiah, renounced all temporal views, and the only one whoſe claim has been ſucceſsful.

[g] Boul. ib. p. 61 and 64. Vid. in anſwer the 1ſt, 2d, and 3d chapters.

[h] Vid. Boul. tome 7, p. 118, and in anſwer, the 1ſt and 2d chapters of the following work.

" bitious,

" bitious, and the moſt enthuſiaſtic of the diſciples of " Jeſus, carried this doctrine (viz. that of Plato " combined with Chriſtianity) ſeaſoned with the " ſublime and the marvellous, to the people of " Greece and Aſia, and even to the inhabitants of " Rome; he had followers, becauſe every man who " addreſſes himſelf to the imagination of the vulgar, " will engage them in his intereſts." And again, " The pretended miracles which Chriſtianity [i] relates, " like thoſe of all other religions, have no other " foundations but the credulity, the enthuſiaſm, and " the ignorance of the populace, and the addreſs of " impoſtors." Speaking of the martyrs, [k] he ſays, " all ſtrong paſſions have their martyrs, Pride, " Vanity, Prejudices, Love, Enthuſiaſm for the pub- " lic good. Even Guilt itſelf produces martyrs " every day, or at leaſt makes thoſe, whom ſuch ob- " jects intoxicate, cloſe their eyes againſt dangers— " is it then wonderful that enthuſiaſm and fanati- " ticiſm, two paſſions the ſtrongeſt amongſt men, " ſhould have ſo often made thoſe who are intoxicat- " ed with the hopes which they inſpire, encounter " death." And again—" the firmneſs of the firſt " Chriſtians muſt, by a natural effect, have formed " proſelytes, and the martyrs prove nothing but the " force of enthuſiaſm, of blindneſs, of obſtinacy,

[i] Vid. Boul. tom. 7, p. 118, and in anſwer 1ſt and 2d chapters of the following work.

[k] Ib. p. 132, 138.

" which ſuperſtition can produce, and the ſenſeleſs " cruelty of all thoſe who perſecute their fellow- " creatures for religious opinions."

Speaking of the ſcriptures, he tells us—" [l] in the " Old Teſtament every thing breathes enthuſiaſm, " fanaticiſm, and madneſs, often dreſſed up in pom- " pous language."—Of the New, he ſays, " that if " we caſt our eyes over the New Teſtament, we " ſhall in the ſame manner ſee in it nothing which " announces that [m] ſpirit of truth which it is ſuppoſed " has dictated that work." Of [n] St. Paul, he ſays, " we find the ſame errors in that pompous nonſenſe, " attributed to St. Paul; this man, filled with the " divine ſpirit, exhibits nothing in his diſcourſes " and his epiſtles but the enthuſiaſm of a madman. " The moſt ſtudied commentaries cannot enable us " to underſtand or reconcile thoſe incoherent contra- " dictions with which his works are filled, or the un- " ſteadineſs of his conduct, ſometimes favourable, " and ſometimes oppoſed to Judaiſm." In one word he tells us, " Paul became the ſoul of his ſect, " his enthuſiaſm communicated itſelf; he braved " dangers, while buſied in encreaſing the number " of his partizans."

Such are the opinions and language of this writer.

[l] Vid. Boulanger, tome 7, p. 179 and 180.

[m] Vid. in anſwer, chap. iii. iv. v. and vi. of the following work.

[n] Vid. Infra, chap. iii. ſect. 4, in anſwer to this charge.

If

If they were peculiar to himſelf, they would perhaps merit little attention ; but * unhappily ſuch opinions and ſuch language are too generally adopted, particularly by this author's countrymen. In that general revolution of opinion which has taken place in that great nation, we have ſeen it paſs, from an apparently blind acquieſcence, in all the corruptions and abuſes which had been engrafted on the goſpel during the dark ages of Gothic ignorance, and papal uſurpation, to as blind and indiſcriminate a condemnation of the entire Chriſtian ſcheme. The abuſes and corruptions of the goſpel have been miſtaken for the goſpel itſelf, and both have too frequently been rejected together : hence we find, that in the pamphlets and journals of the day, in the language of the populace, and ſometimes in more grave writings, and more dignified aſſemblies, fanaticiſm and Chriſtianity have paſſed for ſynonymous terms. " That fanatical prieſts wiſh to delude the " people, by preaching fanatical doctrines, and re- " viving a fanatical worſhip," is the frequent ſubject of complaint and alarm. I am far from accuſing or ſuſpecting the majority of the nation, or its rulers, of entertaining errors ſuch as theſe ; but they have extended ſo widely, as ſhould rouſe every friend to truth and piety to prevent their further ſpread. If

* Mr. Paine in his Age of Reaſon, part 2d, revives the charge of fanaticiſm againſt St. Paul ; he however dwells on it only in a ſingle ſentence, and confeſſes that he only copies Boulanger.

the ſober and benevolent ſyſtem of the goſpel has been ſtigmatized as the offspring of fanaticiſm, and the parent of bigotry and perſecution, it ſeemed no unſeaſonable or uſeleſs attempt to reſort to that goſpel itſelf, and from its plain narration and unadulterated doctrines, vindicate it from thoſe foul aſperſions which have no ſemblance of truth, except when for the divine original men ſubſtitute the corruptions of human fraud or folly, and the miſdeeds of pride and cruelty, which in ages of barbariſm and violence uſurped and abuſed the ſacred name of our holy religion. From a wiſh to contribute ſomething to prevent the ſpread of error, prejudice and impiety, the writer of the following work has endeavoured to vindicate the characters of the apoſtles and evangeliſts from an accuſation now ſo popular. Writing principally for the young and uninformed, he has freely uſed, and gratefully acknowledged, the aſſiſtance of thoſe writers who have treated of the evidence and doctrines of Chriſtianity, by almoſt all of whom this ſubject has been *incidentally* touched on, and by ſome more fully. He has not however confined himſelf entirely to their ideas, but has endeavoured by ſtudying the ſcriptures themſelves, to confirm the concluſion he wiſhed to eſtabliſh, by a greater variety of arguments, and a more full induction of particulars than entered into the plan of *any one* preceding writer. He has choſen to throw his thoughts into the form of a direct proof, rather than that of a particular refutation of objections, as better calculated to ſhew the real ſtrength of the evidence which

ſcripture

ſcripture ſupplies on this topic, and more free from the intricacy and obſcurity of controverſy, ſo apt to diſguſt that claſs of readers, for whom the following pages are chiefly deſigned.

It will not, he hopes, be deemed a deviation from due attention to his principal deſign, that where the ſame facts have ſerved to prove that the apoſtles and evangeliſts were not fraudulent deceivers, as well as to evince their freedom from enthuſiaſm; this has been noticed. In fact, theſe two topics neither can nor ought to be conſidered as entirely ſeparate and unconnected. It is the obſervation of the ſagacious [o] Warburton, "that the moſt ſucceſsful impoſtors, "as we ſay, have ſet out in all the blaze of fanati-"ciſm, and compleated their ſchemes amidſt the "cool depth and ſtillneſs of politics;" and he has illuſtrated the nature of this ſtrange union of fraud and fanaticiſm, as well by the nature of the human mind, as by the examples of Mahomet, Ignatius Loyola, (the founder of the Jeſuits) and Oliver Cromwell; it was therefore deſirable to point out how totally free the firſt preachers of Chriſtianity were from both theſe characters. In truth, integrity, as well as ſobriety of mind, are ſo conſpicuous in the conduct and writings of the apoſtles, that a patient and candid enquirer can ſcarcely ſuſpect them of fraud or fanaticiſm in any ſtep of their progreſs.

[o] Vid. Warburton's Divine Legation, book 3, ſect. 6, ſubſect 3.

Having

Having mentioned Warburton, it ſeems indiſpenſibly neceſſary to vindicate the author from the charge of preſumption, in attempting a ſubject which that celebrated writer has diſcuſſed in his Sermons on enthuſiaſm, and his Doctrine of Grace; it is therefore neceſſary to remark, that the deſign of the following work is widely different from that of the learned prelate, who [p] laboured more to expoſe what he

[p] The ſame obſervation which is here made on Warburton, applies to moſt of the principle works on Fanaticiſm. To Biſhop Stillingfleet's Diſcourſe of the Idolatry and Fanaticiſm of the Church of Rome, c. iv. To the Compariſon between the enthuſiaſm of the papiſts, and ſome modern ſectaries, in 2 vols. Lond. 1751. To Hicks's Spirit of Enthuſiaſm exorciſed, Lond. 1709. To Lee's Hiſtory of Montaniſm. To, The New Pretenders to Prophecy, examined—both annexed to Dr. Hicks's work. To Stinſtra's Eſſay on Fanaticiſm, tranſlated from the Dutch, and publiſhed in Dublin, 1774, by the Rev. Iſaac Subremont. The learned Merick Caſaubon has exhibited a View of the different Species of Enthuſiaſm, in a treatiſe on that ſubject, publiſhed Lond. 1656, which contains much curious information;—but in none of theſe works has it been the object to exhibit a connected view of the direct proofs, which form the ſubject of the following eſſay. Lord Lyttleton on the Converſion of St. Paul, and Dr. Archibald Campbell in his Eſſay to prove the Apoſtles were not Enthuſiaſts, have briefly noticed many of theſe proofs, but the former confines himſelf to that ſingle fact, which was the peculiar object of his work, and the latter extends his argument no farther than to ſhew that the Apoſtles were not Enthuſiaſts in their Belief of the *Reſurrection* of our Lord—on this account the author of the following pages, while he acknowledges the great aſſiſtance he has received from theſe learned writers, is yet led to believe that they do not anticipate the object, or ſuperſede the neceſſity of a more extenſive view of this important

he conceived to be the errors and extravagancies of a particular ſect of Chriſtians, than to illuſtrate the general evidence of Chriſtianity itſelf; this laſt is the ſole object of theſe pages, in which the author anxiouſly wiſhes not a ſingle thought may be found, that has not a tendency to promote, amongſt all ſects of ſincere Chriſtians, that mutual charity and brotherly love, which are perpetually recommended in the goſpel of peace. Happy, indeed, would be the conſequence if different ſects were anxious, not only to remove from the tenets of their faith thoſe errors, which each maintain have infected every other, and to unite the truths which each receive; but if beſides this, they perpetually laboured to purify their practice from every thing ſimilar to the miſconduct, which in others they condemn, and to unite in it every excellence, for which any other deſcription of their brethren is peculiarly diſtinguiſhed, and thus [q] *provoke one another to love, and to good works.* Were this [r] done, diverſity of opinion would contribute to excite

important ſubject, which ſhould conſider the *conduct*, the *writings*, and the *doctrines* of all the apoſtles, and ſhould exclude thoſe controverſies which, in ſo many other works, have diverted the attention of their authors from theſe grand objects.

[q] Hebrews, x. 24.

[r] The following obſervation of the eminently pious and ſagatious Hartley on this ſubject, is well worthy the moſt ſerious attention. Hartley on the Truth of the Chriſtian Religion, prop. 45, vol. 2, of his works, p. 194; or Watſon's Tracts, vol. 1. "The ſucceſs of ſects has, in general, been owing to "their making greater pretences to purity and goſpel per-

"fection

cite emulation in active virtue; thus too, endeavouring to trace the praiſe-worthy conduct of thoſe who diſſent from us, we ſhould be frequently led to obſerve, that even thoſe who differ from us moſt did, notwithſtanding, in many inſtances, exhibit models well worthy of our imitation: hence, where we could not approve of their principles, we ſhould give them due credit for their conduct as better than theſe principles, and none would dare to pronounce men excluded from the pale of ſalvation, who thus, in many inſtances, might appear better than themſelves. An hiſtorical view of the conduct of different ſects, thus deſigned to place their merits, as well as their demerits, in a clear light, unclouded by calumny and prejudice, by bigotry and miſrepreſentation, and to collect the peculiar virtues of each for the common imitation of all, would perhaps materially contribute to ſmooth the aſperity of controverſy, and extend the mildneſs of toleration; it would exhibit a view of eccleſiaſtical hiſtory, well calculated

" ſection than the eſtabliſhed churches, and to their both teach-
" ing and practiſing ſome neceſſary duties which eſtabliſhed
" churches have too much neglected in the corrupted ſtate of
" Chriſtianity. Every ſect of Chriſtians has magnified ſome
" great truth, not above its real value, but above the value
" which other ſects have ſet upon it, and by this means each
" important religious truth has had the advantage of being ſet
" in a full light by ſome party or other, though too much ne-
" glected by the reſt; and the true catholic church, and com-
" munion of ſaints, unites all theſe ſects, by taking what is
" right from each, and leaving the errors, falſehoods, and
" corruptions of each, to combat and deſtroy one another.

to

to improve the friends, and conciliate the adverſaries of religion. The author has been impreſſed with theſe ſentiments, from having been led, while compiling the following work, to obſerve the earneſtneſs with which the apoſtles labour to guard againſt diviſion and animoſity, heat and violence, in conſequence of differences in religious opinions; and he ſhall deem himſelf happy, if by leading the attention of others to the ſame [s] paſſages, he ſhould in any degree contribute to extend the benign influence of Chriſtian charity.

The ſtrictneſs of criticiſm will, it is feared, too often have reaſon to cenſure the ſtile of the following work, as partaking much more of the language and manner of a popular addreſs, than ought to be admitted in an argumentative eſſay. Some indulgence however is hoped for in this reſpect, when it is conſidered that theſe pages were originally compoſed as popular diſcourſes, addreſſed to an audience of young men, and that they are now publiſhed principally for their uſe. They have been thrown into their preſent form, as it appeared beſt adapted to exhibit diſtinctly the ſubdiviſions of the ſubject, and the progreſs of the argument; but the original ſtile was retained, as it ſeemed beſt calculated to keep up the attention of that claſs of readers, for whom it was principally deſigned. But it were

[s] Vid. Infra, p. 200 to 203—229 to 234 and 240 to 245.

well

thus, I do not mean that you ſhould reject all aid from the reſearches of the pious and the good, far otherwiſe. I only wiſh to impreſs upon you, that you are not to rely on any ſecondary information, without recurring frequently and humbly to the divine original. In truth, there is much of the evidence and the inſtruction of the ſacred volume, which can only be felt by ſtudying that volume itſelf. The artleſſneſs, the honeſty, the zeal, the purity, the piety, the love of truth which ſhine in every page of the New Teſtament, cannot be transfuſed into any comment, or any argument which human ingenuity can frame; theſe are the marks of ſound doctrine, which will always make the deepeſt impreſſion on the moſt virtuous hearts.

Study then the ſcriptures; thus will you learn to value Chriſtianity as you ought, as the ſource of rational piety and joy in every ſituation of life, as the certain guide to truth and happineſs. Are you to become its teachers?—thus only can you imbibe the genuine ſpirit, and the uncorrupted tenets of that holy religion you profeſs to teach; thus only can you be enabled to deliver its doctrines free from error, and exemplify its utility by the holineſs of your lives; thus only can you ſave yourſelves, and thoſe that hear you, and give a good account at the great and fearful day of final retribution.

AN ESSAY

AN

ESSAY, &c.

CHAPTER I.

The apoſtles and evangeliſts were not enthuſiaſts, becauſe they did not embrace the faith which they taught, till they had required and received ſufficient proofs of its divine original.

SECTION I.

The general ſtatement and diviſion of the ſubject.

IN reaſoning on the evidence of Chriſtianity, it has been frequently remarked, that almoſt all direct arguments for the certainty of the goſpel hiſtory, may be reduced to two heads; 1ſt. that the founders of the Chriſtian ſcheme did not mean to deceive; 2dly, that they were not themſelves deceived in thoſe facts to which they appealed in proof of a divine interpoſition.

On the firſt head the utmoſt ingenuity of infidelity has ſcarcely been able to diſcover any plauſible objection. The proofs of *ſincerity* in the lives and writings of the firſt teachers of the goſpel are obvious—I had almoſt ſaid irreſiſtible. Men who voluntarily abandoned every worldly intereſt, who deliberately encountered and ſteadily ſuſtained reproach, perſecution, and death, in ſupport of the cauſe which they eſpouſed—muſt have been ſincere.—This point therefore, the advocates for infidelity have generally found it neceſſary to admit, and to take refuge under the pretext, that however ſincere and well-meaning the apoſtles and evangeliſts may have been, they were yet deluded by the violence of religious enthuſiaſm, which is ſo frequently found to diſturb reaſon, and to give to mere viſions of a heated brain the ſemblance of reality.—A pretext the more plauſible, becauſe in ſome leading features enthuſiaſm muſt bear a ſtrong ſimilarity to genuine inſpiration: as the latter pre-ſuppoſes ſincerity and piety, the former may ariſe from zeal ſincere but ill-directed, from devotion heart-felt but overſtrained—both aſſert their claim to attention as derived from God—both are ready to ſacrifice every worldly object in the execution of their purpoſe—and therefore by mere worldly minds, both will too often be pronounced equally irrational and extravagant. But the ſincere and ingenuous enquirer after religious truth will not adopt an opinion, as inconſiſtent with true philoſophy, as it is ſubverſive of

Chriſtianity;

Chriſtianity; he will not confound the frenzy of fanaticiſm with the calm and ſacred voice of the Spirit of God, but, with me, endeavour to trace the plain marks which diſtinguiſh Chriſtianity from enthuſiaſm, and evince that the apoſtles and evangeliſts ſpoke the words of truth and ſoberneſs.

What then is enthuſiaſm in its true and proper ſenſe?—Briefly a ſtrong but groundleſs perſuaſion of being actuated by divine inſpiration, including *two eſſential characters*, the *firſt* [a] that this opinion has been adopted, by him who believes himſelf inſpired, *without ſufficient evidence* [b]—the *ſecond*, that if he requires others ſhould alſo admit the reality of his inſpiration, he inſiſts on their doing ſo, without demanding any proof, or at leaſt on grounds as vain and deluſive as thoſe which have ſatisfied himſelf.—Thus blind credulity and dictatorial poſitiveneſs form the two leading and eſſential marks of an enthuſiaſtic mind.

The ſame deluſion of underſtanding in which theſe originate, will alſo moſt generally diſplay itſelf in a variety of ſubordinate effects, and more or leſs influence the whole *conduct* [c] of life—It will not leſs evidently diſplay itſelf in the *writings* [d] of the enthuſiaſt, by a peculiar turn of thought and ſtile, as

[a] This character is ſhewn in this chapter not to belong to the apoſtles and evangeliſts.

[b] Chap. ii. [c] Chap. iii. [d] Chap. iv. and v.

well as in [e] the *morality* he inculcates, and the *ſpeculative doctrines* he propounds.

Let us conſider the ſubject in this natural order, and in the *firſt place* examine *whether the apoſtles and evangeliſts believed without ſufficient proof*, that their Lord at firſt, and afterwards themſelves, were commiſſioned and empowered by God to reveal to mankind the goſpel ſcheme.

The great proof on which enthuſiaſts rely, is the internal perception [f] of "ſome ſupernatural light, "or ſome divine impulſe, which they aſſert ſhews "itſelf too clearly to be miſtaken, and needs no "other proof but its ſelf-evidence."—Now, though it is almoſt certain that ſuch a perception may accompany real inſpiration, and therefore to affirm that it exiſts, cannot alone and of neceſſity be pronounced enthuſiaſtic; yet when no other proof can be given of a ſupernatural direction, than the aſſerted exiſtence of ſuch a perception, we muſt confeſs it is very ſuſpicious and unſatisfactory.

Experience proves that men are frequently miſled by the warmth of imagination and the ſtrength of paſſions; that they are prone to believe readily what they anxiouſly wiſh, and that minds long abſorbed in religious contemplation are apt to wiſh that they

[e] Chap. vi. [f] Locke's Eſſay on the Human Underſtanding, book 4, chap. xix. on enthuſiaſm, § 8, 9—11.

were

were ſo favoured of God, as to have their opinions and actions under the immediate guidance of heaven, and to be endowed with ſupernatural powers, as the inſtruments of guiding others to heaven, that they may thus be diſtinguiſhed from the human race as the oracles and lights of the world. The belief of our being thus inſpired, is ſo flattering to ſpiritual pride, ſo grateful to ſpiritual indolence, and affords ſo bliſsful a refuge to minds addicted to religious melancholy, that it cannot be wonderful a warm imagination ſhould readily ſuggeſt ſuch a belief, and a weak judgment as readily receive it. Since then a perſuaſion of our being actuated by divine inſpiration may ſo eaſily originate in deluſion, we muſt admit that whenever it cannot be vindicated by clear proofs, from the ſuſpicion of having thus originated, even though it may not be demonſtrably falſe, yet it ought not to be received as infallibly true, by any man who will calmly attend to the dictates of reaſon.

Here then enthuſiaſm fails[g] of evidence, ſince it can produce no proof of inſpiration but internal perception; thus, ſays a great maſter of reaſon, whoſe principles I have [h] adopted,—"He that will "not give himſelf up to all the extravagancies of "deluſion and error, muſt bring this guide of "his light within to the trial.—When God illu-"minates the mind with ſupernatural light, he does

[g] Vid. Locke, ibid. § 11. [h] Vid. Locke, ibid. § 14.

"not

" not extinguiſh that which is natural; if he would
" have us aſſent to the truth of any propoſition,
" he either evidences that truth by the uſual methods
" of natural reaſon, or elſe makes it known to be a
" truth which he would have us aſſent to by his au-
" thority, and convinces us it is from him, by ſome
" marks which reaſon cannot be miſtaken in.—
" [j] Thus, the holy men of old, who had revelations
" from God, had ſomething elſe beſide the internal
" light of aſſurance to teſtify to them that it was from
" God; they had outward ſigns to convince them
" of the author of theſe revelations."

It is not therefore difficult to diſtinguiſh a juſt claim to divine authority from mere enthuſiaſtic deluſion; the latter is founded on internal perſuaſion alone, probably impreſſed by the viſions of a heated imagination or the preſumption of ſpiritual pride; it is obſcure in its origin and utterly defective in its proof, ſince it rarely appeals to any external evidence at all, and never to any clear and deciſive facts; it claims the ſubmiſſion, but diſdains to ſatisfy the doubts of reaſon. The former, on the contrary, eſtabliſhes itſelf by adducing deciſive proofs of a divine interpoſition; it relies on miracles, on prophecy, on hiſtorical facts, which are ſupported by the teſtimony of ſenſe, and bear the ſtricteſt inveſtigation, uniting to internal conviction external evidence; it convinces the underſtanding before it attempts to controul

[j] Locke, ibid. § 15.

the

the will. Its origin is clear, its progreſs gradual, and its proof ſatisfactory.

Examine, by this criterion, the faith of the founders of Chriſtianity. It is the peculiar character of enthuſiaſm not to be conſcious of the weakneſs of thoſe proofs to which it appeals, it therefore employs no diſguiſe to conceal their weakneſs, but perpetually betrays itſelf by the very nature of the evidence which it adduces in its ſupport. We may therefore examine the account which the apoſtles have given of the origin of their faith, ſecure that if it was founded on the deluſion of fanaticiſm, that deluſion will appear in the whole tenor of the goſpel hiſtory.

SECTION II.

The faith of the apoſtles in their Lord, at its firſt origin and progreſs, was founded not on the deluſions of enthuſiaſm, but on rational proofs.

IT is peculiarly important to trace the firſt origin of any opinion, becauſe this frequently decides its permanent character. When therefore the twelve apoſtles firſt followed their divine Maſter, was it from the power of enthuſiaſtic caprice? Conſider

our

our Lord's entrance on his miniſtry. John was baptizing in the river Jordan, at noon-day, ſurrounded by multitudes, "from [l] Jeruſalem and "all Judea, and all the region round about;" the humble Jeſus approaches—for thirty years [m] had he lived in retirement—no fame [n] of private miracles or ſecret inſpirations had been ſpread abroad, to inflame public expectation or deceive vulgar credulity; he had practiſed no religious auſterity [o] to excite veneration; he had collected no partizans to ſupport his authority; he approaches as a young man, alone and undiſtinguiſhed, modeſtly deſiring to partake of the baptiſm of John—but undiſtinguiſhed he did not long remain, the prophet diſcerned and acknowledged his ſuperior dignity: nor was internal perſuaſion the only proof of the truth of this acknowledgment—no,—a ſenſible and awful miracle eſtabliſhed the veracity of the prophet, and the dignity of our Lord [p]—for "the heavens were opened, and he "ſaw the Holy Ghoſt deſcending like a dove, and "lighting upon him, and lo—a voice from heaven

[l] Matt. iii. 5. [m] Luke, iii. 23.

[n] This is put beyond diſpute, by the manner in which St. John ſpeaks of the miracle of water turned into wine.—"This "*beginning* of miracles did Jeſus in Cana of Galilee."—John ii. 11.

[o] This was the caſe not only before the commencement, but during the whole courſe of our Lord's miniſtry. Vid. Newcome's Obſervations on our Lord's Conduct, p. 347, on our Lord's temperance. Dublin edit. 1782.

[p] Matt. iii. 17.

"ſaying,

" ſaying, This is my beloved Son in whom I am " well pleaſed."

Thus aſſured of the divine miſſion of our Lord, the Baptiſt naturally pointed him out to the attention of his diſciples [q]. As he ſtood and looked upon Jeſus, he ſaith to two of them, " behold the Lamb of God," and they followed Jeſus. Thus they were *directed to his acquaintance*, but they only abode with him one day; they afterwards, as was moſt natural, brought to him ſome of their neareſt relatives and moſt intimate friends, but it does not appear that any of them became his *permanent* followers till after many additional opportunities of liſtening to the wiſdom of his inſtructions, and viewing the wonders of his power.—He convinced Nathaniel that he was the " Son of God, the king of Iſrael," by revealing to him the ſecret thoughts of his heart [r].—At Cana [f] of Galilee, by the miracle of water turned into wine; " he manifeſted forth " his glory, and his diſciples believed in him". In

[q] John i. 35—39. Newcome's Harmony, § 18.

[r] John i. 45.

[f] John ii. 11. Newcome's Harmony, § 19. This miracle is fully vindicated from the objections of unbelievers, by Archbiſhop Newcome, in his view of our Lord's character, p. 2. ch. 1. § 5.—p. 347. By Biſhop Law, in his reflections on the life and character of Chriſt, annexed to his theory of religion, p. 284. note [kk]. Alſo in Stackhouſe's hiſtory of the bible, vol. 5. p. 356. Alſo in the miracles of Jeſus vindicated, ſuppoſed to be written by Dr. Pierce, biſhop of Rocheſter, 2d edit. Lond. 1729, part iii. p. 22.

Jeruſalem,

Jeruſalem, when the whole nation was aſſembled to celebrate the paſſover, our Lord aſſerted his ſacred dignity, and proved it by the ſtupendous miracles he wrought—"[t] *even on the feaſt day many* "*believed in his name when they ſaw the miracles* "*which he did.*"

To this public manifeſtation of his power his diſciples muſt ſurely have been attentive witneſſes. —Nor were theſe public miracles the only proofs afforded to thoſe whom he meant to *ſelect for his apoſtles*; their gracious Lord condeſcended to work ſome particular miracles for their particular conviction and advantage. The ſupernatural draught[u] of fiſhes, of which Peter and Andrew, James and John, were the aſtoniſhed witneſſes, prepared them to leave all things that they might follow and obey his ſacred call.—The[x] ſincere faith of Peter was rewarded and confirmed by the miraculous reſtoration of his mother from the bed of death; and *his* houſe was the ſcene, around which crouds aſſembled and ſupplicated the all-powerful interpoſition of our Saviour's mercy to heal their various diſeaſes, and all received his gracious aid.

[t] John ii. 23. Newcome's Harmony, § 20, p. 28.

[u] Mark i. 16—20. Luke v. 1—11. Newcome's Harmony, § 26. p. 38, notes, p. 13.

[x] Matt. viii. 14—17. Mark i. 29—34. Luke iv. 38—41. Newcome's Harmony, § 28, p. 40, notes p. 14.

Thus

Thus the faith of his * followers was originally founded, not on [y] blind credulity, but on rational conviction—not on internal perſuaſion alone, but on clear and ſtupendous miracles, proofs ſubmitted to their ſenſes and approved by their reaſon,

* In ſtating the facts which it ſeemed neceſſary to notice, I have followed the order adopted by Primate Newcome in his Harmony, and have with him ſuppoſed the miniſtry of our Lord to have held during three years, or more.—But though I am perſuaded of the truth of this hypotheſis, I think it expedient to remark, that its truth is no way *eſſential* to my argument; if we adopt the opinion of Dr. Mann, and Dr. Prieſtly, that our Lord's miniſtry terminated in a year and a few months, and follow the order of events which this hypotheſis requires; ſtill the main ſeries of facts on which my reaſonings are founded remains unchanged.—The apoſtles had the ſame cauſes to attract their attention at firſt, and ſtrengthen their conviction in every ſtep of its progreſs; the only difference is that on the latter ſyſtem the events are united together more cloſely—they exhibit the ſame cauſes, but in ſomewhat a more rapid ſucceſſion producing the ſame effects.—In proof of this I refer my reader to Dr. Prieſtly's Harmony, § 10, on the order of the events—and the calendar of our Saviour's miniſtry annexed to the harmony—he makes a greater number of miracles precede the ſelection of the twelve, but fewer intervene between that ſelection and their firſt miſſion.

[y] Newcome's Preface to his Harmony, p. 5. "Previouſly "to the call of the four apoſtles, Mark i. 16—28. Andrew "had been the Baptiſt's diſciple, and had received his teſti- "mony to Jeſus (probably alſo St. John, according to the beſt "commentators on John i. 35) Peter had been brought to Jeſus "by Andrew, his brother, and Jeſus had ſhewn more than hu- "man knowledge, and more than human power, which pro- "bably had fallen within the experience of theſe diſciples, or, "at leaſt, muſt have gained their belief on the firmeſt "grounds."

which

which enthuſiaſm could not have counterfeited, and never would have required; and at every ſtep of its progreſs, as their faith was called to ſignalize itſelf by new exertions, or to ſuſtain new trials, it was fortified by new proofs.

During a conſiderable period, (probably a whole[‡] year) had his diſciples been hearers of his doctrines, and witneſſes of his power, before he ſelected from them twelve, to become his miniſters and apoſtles. Immediately, on this ſelection, he deſcends with them into the plain, and heals multitudes in their preſence. A conſiderable interval, filled with the moſt * awful miracles, intervened between this call,

[‡] Vid. Newcome's Preface to his Harmony, p. 5. "The "jealouſy of the Jewiſh rulers was not early awakened by the "call of the twelve apoſtles to a ſtated attendance. This "event took place after our Lord had celebrated his ſecond "paſſover at Jeruſalem, when he was about to abſent himſelf "from that city for ſo long an interval as eighteen months; "in like manner the ſeventy were not ſent forth, to ſhew, "throughout a wide tract of country, with what wiſdom and "power their Maſter endued them till within about ſix months "of our Lord's crucifixion."—Vid. alſo the notes on ſection 33, of Newcome's Harmony, p. 16. Matt. x.2—4. Mark iii. 13—19. Luke vi. 12—19.

* Between the ſelection of the twelve and their firſt miſſion, amongſt many other miracles were the following diſtinguiſhed ones—the ſervant of the Centurion at Capernaum, Matt. viii. Luke vii.—Newcome's Harmony, § 37, p. 63. the widows' ſon at Nain is raiſed from the dead, Luke vii. 11.—Newcome's Harmony, § 38, a tempeſt is calmed by a word, Matt. viii. 23—26. Luke viii. 22.—Newcome's Harmony, § 50, and the daughter of Jairus is raiſed to life, Matt. ix. 18. Mark v. 22. Luke vii. 41. Newcome's Harmony, § 52.

and

and his delegation of them to visit the cities of Judah, that they might teach and work miracles themselves. —And in that mission they received such new and signal proofs of divine assistance, that any attempt to account for them by the delusions of enthusiasm is the extreme of absurdity. "They departed and "went through the towns and healed every where." After another long interval seventy disciples, with similar power, were sent forth, and with equal success; [aa] "they returned with joy", recounting the wonders they had wrought.

SECTION III.

Some circumstances which have afforded pretexts for imputing our Lord's miracles to the force of enthusiasm, considered and explained.

IT may be necessary here to remark, that the series of miracles which our blessed Lord performed, was decidedly above every possibility of being accounted for by any enthusiastic delusions, or any force of imagination in the persons on whom these miracles were wrought. A suspicion, which has been sometimes raised, from our [a] Lord's appearing to require faith in those who were healed, and from its

[a] Vid. Christianity not founded on argument, p. 49.
[aa] Luke x. 17.

being

being recorded, that he could not, or would not, work many mighty works at Nazareth, becauſe of their unbelief. But even in thoſe caſes which have given occaſion to this ſuſpicion, from our Lord's requiring faith before he conferred his miraculous favours, one obſervation which has not been, I think, ſufficiently attended to, ſeems to me to prove to a certainty, that it was not becauſe the ſucceſs of the miracle, in any degree, depended on this faith; we uniformly find that our Lord required faith, only in the perſon *at whoſe requeſt* the miracle *was vouchſafed*, *not* at all *in the patient on whom it was wrought*, except he applied *in perſon* for the cure. —Thus, when [b] the nobleman, whoſe ſon was ſick at Capernaum, applied to our Saviour at Cana of Galilee, "to come down and heal him, for he "was at the point of death." Our Lord anſwers him, "*except ye ſee ſigns and wonders ye will not* "*believe; but go thy way, thy ſon liveth; and the* "*man believed and went his way.*"—Now, could the force of imagination in the father heal the abſent ſon?

Thus alſo, when the [c] Centurion at Capernaum ſent the elders of the Jews to beſeech him "*to heal* "*his ſervant, who was very dear to him, who was* "*ſick and ready to die,*"—and proved the greatneſs

[b] John iv. 43—54. Newcome's Harmony, § 24.

[c] Matt. viii. 5.—13. Luke vii. 1.—10. Newcome's Harmony, § 37.

of

of his faith by declaring, " *Lord, I am not worthy* " *that thou ſhouldſt come under my roof, but ſay the* " *word only, and my ſervant ſhall be healed.*" Our Lord declares, " he had not found ſo great faith, no not in Iſrael;" and adds, " go thy way, and as " thou haſt believed, ſo be it done unto thee."— Here, could the faith of the maſter contribute to the cure of the ſervant, except only as being the motive of our Lord's prompt interference? Thus the faith of the perſon on whoſe application the miracle is wrought (whether the patient himſelf or another) is the cauſe of the cure, no otherwiſe than as it was the cauſe, firſt of the application, and next of our Lord's complying with it; but though this faith muſt have preceded that particular miracle, does it therefore follow that it was not founded on any obſervation of our Lord's divine power, but that it muſt have been derived from irrational credulity and blind enthuſiaſm? Surely not.—In every inſtance, when we find ſuch faith required, it is plain from the hiſtory, that the perſon of whom it was required, muſt have had opportunities of being fully aſſured of our Lord's ſupernatural power, and gracious mercy in exerting it.—When men improved theſe opportunities with ſerious attention, when they judged from what they ſaw and heard with fairneſs and candour, they could not fail of receiving a full conviction of our Lord's divine character; and if in conſequence of this conviction they applied to him with ſerioufneſs and humi-

lity,

lity, he never refuſed to lend a pitying ear, and extend a ſaving arm: thus he rewarded the ſincere believer, while he diſplayed a proof of his power to the unconverted.

But men frequently acted in a manner totally the reverſe of this; they neglected or perverted the fulleſt opportunities of conviction—like the [d] Phariſees, they attributed the plaineſt manifeſtations of divine benevolence to the influence of malignant demons—or applied to ſee a [e] ſign; not becauſe they had not already ſeen abundant wonders, but becauſe they reſolved not to be ſatisfied with any evidence, except ſuch as they pre-conceived would mark out that temporal deliverer, whom alone their worldly minds expected or deſired; an expectation in which when they found themſelves diſappointed by the meek Jeſus; they received his virtues with hatred, and were irritated almoſt to madneſs by his miracles. Some, like [f] Herod, only hoped to ſee a miracle performed, from idle curioſity, without any deſire for information or conviction, but rather with a fixed averſion to the purity and benevolence of that ſyſtem which the Son of God laboured to inculcate and exemplify.—Others, like the [g] Nazarites, beheld his mighty works, and heard

[d] Matt. xii. 22.—37. Newcome's Harmony, § 42.
[e] Matt. 12.—38.
[f] Luke xxiii. 6.—12.
[g] Luke iv. 15.—31. Newcome's Harmony, § 25. Again, Matt. xiii. 54.—58. Newcome's Harmony, § 55.

his

his wiſe inſtructions, not with reverence but with indignation, becauſe their proud and worldly minds were offended with the apparent meanneſs of his origin, in conſequence of which, they would not condeſcend to apply to our Lord for his interference, notwithſtanding his long experienced power.—In all theſe caſes the Son of God *would not* gratify the vain and unreaſonable expectations of ſome, or waſte his miracles on others, who deſpiſed both him and them, for he *could not* do this conſiſtently with the dignity of his office, and the object of his miſſion, which was calculated to try and to exalt the moral character of men, by ſupplying abundant evidence to the fair and humble enquirer, without [h] extorting the aſſent of the wilfully blind and obſtinately negligent, or violently ſubduing to a reluctant ſubmiſſion the incorrigibly vicious and perverſe.

Thus it was that the want of faith prevented our Lord from diſpenſing his miraculous favours; but never did the benign Jeſus, when implored, refuſe to exerciſe his ſupernatural power in relieving miſery; and in no inſtance did he ever attempt to exerciſe it without full ſucceſs; while in the objects and the manner of the operation he conſtantly diſplayed a juſt ſelection and calm dignity, utterly inconſiſtent with the extravagance of fanaticiſm.

[h] Vid. John iii. 1—21. Alſo v. 41, and eſpecially John vii 17. Alſo Luke viii. 4—18.

Our Lord's ſometimes appearing to conceal his miracles, has alſo induced a ſuſpicion that they could not ſtand the teſt of rational enquiry; but it is eaſy to account for this circumſtance, ſo as totally to repel the ſuſpicion. It cannot ſurely be denied, that our Lord exhibited multiplied proofs of his divine miſſion even to his enemies, from whom however he was obliged frequently to ſhade the full ſplendor of theſe proofs, and to avoid diſcloſing the full extent of thoſe objects which he came to accompliſh, and the high majeſty of that character which he was entitled to aſſume, becauſe thus only could he ſecure the credibility, the reputation, and the ſucceſs, of that religion which he laboured to eſtabliſh. In order to ſecure theſe infinitely important objects, it was neceſſary "that he ſhould[i] compleat the time foretold "of his miniſtry, and after a life illuſtrious in mira- "cles and good works, attended with humility, "meekneſs, patience and ſufferings, and every way "conformable to the prophecies of him, ſhould be "led as a ſheep to the ſlaughter, and with all quiet "and ſubmiſſion ſhould be brought to the croſs, "though there were no guilt or fault in him: this "could not have been, if as ſoon as he appeared in "public, and began to preach, he had preſently "profeſſed himſelf to have been the Meſſiah, the "*king* who owned that kingdom he publiſhed to be

[i] Vid. Locke's Reaſonableneſs of Chriſtianity. Watſon's Tracts, vol. iv. p. 23.

"at

" at hand, for the Sanhedrim would have then taken " hold on it to have got him in their power, and " thereby have taken away his life—at leaſt they " would have diſturbed his miniſtry, and hindred " the work he was about"—[k] obliging him perhaps to ſubmit prematurely to their violence, or to uſe ſuch ſupernatural methods of eſcape or reſiſtance, and to inflict ſuch ſupernatural puniſhments, as would be inconſiſtent with the humble, merciful, and unreſiſting character which it became him to ſupport, and ſuch as might prevent thoſe final ſufferings it was neceſſary he ſhould undergo.

Another purpoſe equally important to which this reſerve was neceſſary, was, that he " ſhould not be " ſeized for any thing that might make him a crimi- " nal to the government, and therefore he avoided " giving thoſe, who, in the diviſion that was about " him, inclined towards him, occaſion of tumult for " his ſake; or to the Jews, his enemies, matter of " juſt accuſation out of his own mouth, by profeſ- " ſing himſelf to be the Meſſiah, the king of [l] Iſrael, " in direct words."—Hence alſo he was obliged frequently to conceal his miracles, which would have rouſed the impetuous multitude, full of their ideas of a temporal Meſſiah, to repeat their efforts, to " [m] take him by force and make him a king"—an

[k] Locke's Reaſonableneſs of Chriſtianity. Watſon's Tracts, vol. iv. p. 58. [l] Locke, ibid. p. 47. [m] John vi. 15.

event

event, which had it taken place, and been with any ſhadow of reaſon chargeable on our Lord's conduct, would have totally defeated the ſacred purpoſe of his miſſion, ſince he would thus have appeared to have been juſtly puniſhed for abuſing religion to gratify ambition, inſtead of appearing the founder of a religion whoſe ſcheme was totally free from every mixture of temporal and narrow views, and every way worthy of the Son of God.

Had our Lord been impelled by the violence of enthuſiaſm, it is not conceivable that ſuch would not have been his fate; but the conſummate prudence which regulated his every action, enabled him to ſteer his way through all the dangers that ſurrounded him.—In conformity to ſuch prudence it was, that he ſo often commanded thoſe on whom he wrought his miracles—"*Go, and tell no man who has made* "*thee whole;*" but his apoſtles he was ever careful ſhould be eye witneſſes of all his wondrous works, and conſtant hearers of his words; to them he explained every difficulty, and condeſcended gradually to enlighten their underſtandings and diſpel their prejudices.—A *ſelect number* of them attended his moſt private miracles—they beheld the awful anticipation of his divine glory at the [n] transfiguration on the mount, which they were commanded not to declare till after his reſurrection, becauſe then only

[n] Matt. xvii. Luke ix. Mark ix.

they

they could declare it without any danger of being underſtood to deſcribe a temporal Meſſiah.—Thus even the concealment of our Lord's divine works, which in ſome inſtances took place, ſo far from juſtifying any ſuſpicion of their being founded on fanatic deluſion, clearly ſhews they were under the direction of the moſt perfect wiſdom, and performed, as well as related, with every mark of ſoberneſs.

SECTION IV.

The nature of the miracles wrought by our Lord during his public miniſtry, and the circumſtances which attended them, prove they cannot be aſcribed to the power of enthuſiaſm.

THE leaſt attention to the evangelic hiſtory will ſatisfy us, that the ſubjects of our Lord's miracles were moſt generally ſuch as no power of imagination, no deluſion of enthuſiaſm, could poſſibly influence. [o] To turn water into wine—[p] to feed 5000 perſons at one time on five loaves and two fiſhes, and [q] 4000 at another, on ſeven loaves and a few ſmall fiſhes—[r] to reſtore a withered limb—to give ſight to a man [s] forty years old, who had been *born blind*—

[o] John ii. 1—12. [p] Luke ix. 14. John vi. 10.
[q] Matt. xv. 32—38. [r] Matt. xii. 9. Luke vi. 6—11.
[s] John ix.

to

to raiſe from the dead a carcaſe that was [t] carrying out to the grave; and [u] another that had lain four days in the tomb: in theſe and a variety of other miracles which our Saviour wrought, no force of imagination could have the ſmalleſt influence. In truth, nothing can be more repugnant to reaſon or experience, than the ſuppoſition that our Lord's miracles were the effects of any force of imagination, or enthuſiaſtic impulſe; or that if any deluſion had taken place with regard to them, it would not have been immediately detected and expoſed. In proof of this let us briefly conſider their infinite variety, and their uniform ſucceſs—the public manner in which they were performed—their being frequently wrought in the preſence of his moſt inveterate enemies, and attended with circumſtances which attracted the immediate attention of theſe enemies, and excited the ſevereſt ſcrutiny. Theſe circumſtances do not vindicate them more clearly from all ſuſpicion of having been produced by the artifices of fraud, than from all poſſibility of being accounted for by enthuſiaſm.

The impulſe of fanaticiſm will produce its effects irregularly, uncertainly, and imperfectly, according to the different nature of the diſeaſe, the force of imagination in the diſeaſed, the temperature of the conſtitution, and a variety of other circumſtances; and theſe effects will be often as tran-

[t] Luke vii. 11—17. [u] John xi. 1—54.

ſitory

ſitory as the power that produces them is variable. Not ſuch were the effects of that truly divine power poſſeſſed by our Lord; which operated uniformly and equally on every diſeaſe, on multitudes of different tempers, ages, habits, religions, ſo as never once to fail; and this at the firſt application, compleatly and permanently, ſo that no one complained of a relapſe, or of having been imperfectly healed. Nothing is more clear in the goſpel hiſtory than this, the evangeliſts relate confidently that our Lord healed multitudes at [x] Capernaum, at the * ſea of Galilee, afterwards in the plain, through all the cities and villages of Galilee; at Genneſareth, even in the [y] temple at Jeruſalem on the ſabbath-day, ſhortly before his crucifixion. In all theſe places were brought unto him *all who lay ſick of divers diſeaſes*, the "blind, the dumb, the lame, ſick perſons borne in beds, [z] thoſe that had the palſy, demoniacks, lunaticks, *and he healed them all—every one, as many as touched him* were made whole."

Of theſe miracles multitudes were witneſſes, who attended him from place to place; ſometimes crouding the houſes where he was, ſo that there was "*no room, no, not ſo much as about the door;*"

[x] Luke iv. 40. v. 17—26. vi. 12—19. viii. 1. Matt. iv. 23—25. ix. 34. xi. 4. xiv. 35. Newcome's Harmony, § 28, 29, 30—34, 35, 32—68.

[y] Matt. xxi. 14. [z] Matt. iv. 23. John xii. 37.

* Vid. Appendix.

thronging

thronging round him in the ſtreets, following him to the ſea; to the moſt retired and uninhabited parts of the country, the mountains, the deſert—ſtaying with him near "[a] *three days together; ſo that he and* "*his diſciples had not leiſure ſcarcely even to eat*"—and theſe multitudes came from various and diſtant places; for great multitudes, ſay the evangeliſts, "[b] fol-"lowed him *from Galilee, and from Decapolis, and from* "*Jeruſalem, and from Judea, and from beyond Jor-*"*dan, from Idumea, and they of Tyre and Sidon,* "and his fame went throughout all Syria, and they "brought unto him all ſick people, and from all "the region round about Geneſareth.—And what is moſt important to obſerve, amongſt theſe witneſſes of our Saviour's miracles, we often find his moſt inveterate enemies, the prieſts and ſcribes, the Phariſees and Sadducees, who very early conceived a rooted averſion to the humble and pure Jeſus, and watched the progreſs of his miniſtry with a jealouſy which raged with ſtill encreaſing fury, till it glutted itſelf with his blood.

Theſe enemies always attended the ſynagogues where he frequently wrought his miracles; they often alſo mixed with the multitude, and watched to detect any thing cenſureable in his conduct.—Did he aſſume the character of the Son of God, and the power of forgiving ſins, they were ready to accuſe him of

[a] Matt xv. 32. Ib. xiv. 13. [b] Matt. iv. 25. Mark iii. 8. Luke iv. 38—44 and 5. 1—17. John vi. 2.

blaſphemy.

blaſphemy.—Did he eat bread with unwaſhed hands, in oppoſition to their traditions, they were filled with indignation.—Did he neglect to imitate their hypocritical auſterity in faſtings—and did he aſſociate with the humble and penitent converts, they reproached him with being a wine bibber, a friend of publicans and ſinners.—Did he reſtore health and vigor to the diſeaſed, even theſe works of mercy, if *performed on the ſabbath*, they condemned as impious violations of that ſacred day.

Such were the men who watched to entangle him in his talk, who laboured to enſnare him with inſidious queſtions, in order to diſcover ſomething that might give room for accuſing him to the Roman governor; yet to theſe vigilant and ſubtle enemies did our Lord, at the moment he was about to perform many of his miracles, or after he had performed them, fearleſsly appeal in vindication of his own character, and to expoſe their obſtinate perverſeneſs and malignity.—Inſtances of this are frequent.

At [c] Capernaum, as he was teaching, there were *Phariſees and doctors of the law ſitting by, which were come out of every town of Galilee and Judea, and Jeruſalem*—a paralytic man was let down through the roof, with his couch, in the midſt before Jeſus, and

[c] Luke v. 17—26. Mark ii. 1—12. Matt. ix. 2—8. Newcome's Harmny, § 30.

when

when he ſaw their faith, (the faith of the perſons who brought him, as well as of the man himſelf) he ſaid unto him, "Son be of good cheer, thy ſins "are forgiven thee;" but when certain of the ſcribes and Phariſees "reaſoned in their hearts, ſaying, who "is this that thus ſpeaketh blaſphemies? who can "forgive ſins but God alone?" Our Lord immediately expoſes their perverſe malignity, "why think "ye evil in your heart, but that ye may know that "the Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive "ſins, he ſaith unto the ſick of the palſy, ariſe, take "up thy bed and go unto thy houſe, and immedi-"ately he aroſe, took up the bed whereon he lay, "and went out before them all glorifying God."

[d] Thus again, on the ſabbath-day, in a ſynagogue of Galilee, as he taught, there was a man with a withered hand; "*and the ſcribes and Phariſees* watch-"ed whether he would heal him on the ſabbath day; "and he reaſoned with them, and aſked them, is it "lawful on the ſabbath-day to do good or to do evil, "to ſave life or to deſtroy it? but they held their "peace; and when he looked round about him with "anger, at the hardneſs of their hearts, he ſaith unto "the man—ſtretch forth thine hand, and he ſtretched "it out, *and his hand was reſtored whole as the other,* "*and they were filled with madneſs, and took council* "*how they might deſtroy him.*

[d] Matt. xii. 9—21. Mark iii. 1—12. Luke vi. 6—11.

Thus

Thus alſo the cure of the man who had been born [c] blind, underwent an immediate and ſevere ſcrutiny by the enemies of our Lord. The Phariſees examine firſt the man himſelf, then his parents—then again the man, and when he perſevered in proving, that the miracle was wrought by Jeſus, and honeſtly avowed the concluſion which his reaſon dictated; "*that if this man were not of God he could do nothing*," they reply with the wounded pride of bigotry—"*thou waſt altogether born in ſins, and* doſt thou *teach us*;" and like all bigots, who will ſilence by puniſhment thoſe whom they cannot confute by reaſon, they excommunicate this honeſt and grateful witneſs of the power and mercy of Chriſt: yet our Lord meets him ſoon after in the preſence of ſome of the Phariſees, recalls the miracle to their recollection, avows his character as the Son of God, and reproaches them with their obſtinate blindneſs.

Still more remarkable is the account which the evangeliſts, with almoſt unequalled impartiality and humility, deliver of the apoſtles attempting to cure a child who was poſſeſſed with a dumb ſpirit, lunatick and ſore vexed, and *their having failed in the*

[c] John ix. 1—34. I earneſtly recommend this paſſage to the attention of my young readers. The ſtriking ſimplicity of the narrative, the natural conduct of all the parties, and the ſtrict ſcrutiny the miracle ſuſtained, cannot fail of making a deep impreſſion on every candid mind. Vid further particulars in the Appendix.

attempt;

attempt ;—the ſcribes, ever vigilant to diſcredit their miſſion, inſtantly appear active and curious, queſtioning them in the preſence of the multitude. Our Lord approaches, aſks the ſcribes " what queſtion ye with them"—diſcovers the cauſe, and inſtantly, in the preſence of the ſame multitude, and the ſame watchful enemies, compleatly cures the child.

What circumſtances could diſplay more ſtrongly the ſtrict ſcrutiny to which our Lord's miracles were expoſed from his enemies, and the fearleſsneſs with which he ſubmitted them to that ſcrutiny [f] ?

Thus alſo many of the Jews, who were witneſſes of that great and awful miracle the [g] reſurrection of Lazarus, were plainly *enemies*, for immediately they inform the Phariſees, who call a council with the chief prieſts ; and ſaid, " what do we, for this man " doeth many miracles ? if we thus let him alone all " men will believe in him ; and the Romans will " come and take away both our place and nation." Thus their alarm at the apprehended deſtruction of their church and ſtate, counteracted the effect of an acknowledged ſupernatural interpoſition ; and conceiving themſelves juſtified by the expediency of

[f] Matt. xvii. 14. Mark ix. 14. Luke ix. 37.

[g] John xi. Why this miracle is mentioned only by St. John, ſee admirably well accounted for in Lardner's Vindication of it, vol. 2, p. 11 to 28, edit. of 1788.

committing

committing a private crime, for a ſuppoſed public good; the expediency "*that one man ſhould die for* "*the people, and that the whole nation periſh not;*" they from that moment took counſel to put to death Jeſus, the teacher of righteouſneſs and diſpenſer of mercy.

From all theſe inſtances I conclude with confidence, that our Lord's miracles were totally independent of any enthuſiaſtic deluſion. Experience proves, that ſuch deluſions ſeldom laſt longer than while they meet with minds all equally and fitly diſpoſed to catch the impulſe, as it paſſes, like an electric ſhock from ſoul to ſoul; but when numbers are conſtantly found to reſiſt and repel, inſtead of yielding to and forwarding this influence, its progreſs meets a ſpeedy check, and the deluſion fails. Hence it is, that enthuſiaſts can bear as little as impoſtors, the preſence and the inſpection even of cold and neutral ſpectators; much leſs of jealous ſcrutinizing enemies. Not ſo our Lord, he perpetually appealed to the ſober reaſon even of his moſt obſtinate enemies, to judge from plain facts, and acknowledged truths, of his right to the divine authority he aſſumed, and the validity of the proofs on which he reſted his claims. His addreſſes on this ſubject are numerous and ſtriking, and ſo important to our preſent purpoſe, that I cannot paſs them by.

"As

" As Jeſus walked in the temple, came the Jews " round about him, and ſaid unto him, how long " doſt thou make us to doubt? If thou be the Chriſt " tell us plainly. And Jeſus anſwered, I told you, " and you believed me not: *the works that I do in* " *my Father's name they bear witneſs of me*[g]. And " again, *if I do not the works of my Father, believe me* " *not; but if I do, though ye believe not me, believe* " *the works*, that ye may know and believe that the " Father is in me, and I in him."

When John [h] ſent his diſciples to aſk Jeſus, art thou he that ſhould come; or do we look for another? How directly does our Lord appeal to the miracles which he was at that moment performing— " *Go and ſhew John again thoſe things which you do ſee* " *and hear, the blind receive their ſight, and the lame* " *walk; the lepers are cleanſed, and the deaf hear;* " *the dead are raiſed up, and the poor have the goſpel* " *preached to them; and bleſſed is he whoſoever ſhall not* " *be offended in me.*" Immediately after, he upbraids [i] the cities in which his mighty works were wrought, becauſe they repented not; and ſtates their wilful and obſtinate neglect of ſuch proofs as the higheſt aggravation of their guilt. Finally, how fully and calmly does he appeal to the various proofs of his divine miſſion, in order to expoſe and overturn the ob-

[g] John x. 23, 24, and 36, 37.
[h] Matt. xi. 2—29. Luke vii. 18—35.
[i] Matt. xi. 20—30.

ſtinate

ſtinate perverſeneſs of the Jews, who ſought to kill him, becauſe he healed on the ſabbath, and aſſumed the character of the Son of God. "[k] *If I bear witneſs of myſelf my witneſs is not true—there is another that beareth witneſs of me, and I know that the witneſs which he witneſſeth of me is true; ye ſent unto John, and he bare witneſs unto the truth. But I have greater witneſs than that of John; for the works which the Father hath given me to finiſh, the ſame works that I do bear witneſs of me, that the Father hath ſent me.*" And this ſtrong appeal to prophetic teſtimony "*Search the ſcriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and they are they which teſtify of me: had ye believed Moſes ye would have believed me, for he wrote of me.*" Such were the proofs by which our Lord's diſciples were convinced of his divine authority. How different from the viſions of enthuſiaſm, which appeal to no credentials but the impulſe of ſecret inſpiration, and reſt on no ſupport but blind credulity.

[k] John v. 18, to the end

SECTION

SECTION V.

The apoſtles belief in their Lord's reſurrection, and in the ſubſequent manifeſtations of his divine power, was not imputable to enthuſiaſm.

IF during the life time of their Lord the apoſtles received ſuch evidence of his divine authority as no enthuſiaſm could ſupply, ſuch evidence as approves itſelf to our reaſon, and abundantly accounts for their ready obedience to their Maſter's call, and their adherence to his perſon, even unto death, much more did they receive clear and undeniable proofs of his reſurrection from the dead.

If indeed we contemplate their ſituation and conduct at this important criſis, it will appear, that enthuſiaſm muſt have been wholly excluded from their minds. Suppoſe for a moment, that by ſome unaccountable means, they had been worked up into an enthuſiaſtic belief of miracles they had never ſeen, and of divine perfections, which exiſted only in their fond imaginations, how utterly impoſſible that ſuch a deluſion ſhould have ſurvived their crucified Lord. They had, as they [1] confeſs, followed him as a tem-

[1] Matt. xvi. 21. to the end. Mark ix. 33—37. Matt. xx. to xxviii. compare Mark x. 35—45. Luke xxiv. 31.

poral

poral Meſſiah, who would prove by miracles his claim to the throne of David, who would be received by the aſſembled thouſands of Iſrael, reſcue them from the Roman yoke, and ſubjugate to their power the remoteſt nations of the earth. But the event exhibited the total reverſe of this; their Maſter ſeized, bound, accuſed, declaring "*his kingdom was not of this world,*" and ſubmitting, without reply or reſiſtance, to inſult and outrage; they ſaw him perſecuted by the prieſts and rulers; they heard the populace clamour for his condemnation, till the Roman governor pronounced his ignominious doom; and they beheld him expire on the croſs, dying the death of the accurſed, and lodged in the depths of the grave. Every fond hope ſeemed to be thus for ever blaſted, every ambitious thought was cruſhed, every prejudice of their religion, their education, outraged.

Alas! what deluſion could have withſtood ſuch a ſhock as this? what credulity could have longer blinded? what enthuſiaſm could have longer poſſeſſed them? how diſappointed, how dejected, how alarm-

Even after his reſurrection, they reſumed for ſome time the ſame ideas of his kingdom, as appears from their queſtion to him, Acts i. 6. "Lord, wilt thou at this time reſtore again the "kingdom to Iſrael?" So ill prepared were they for the ſpiritual and enlarged ſcheme of the goſpel, till enlightened and directed by the miraculous effuſion of the holy Spirit.

ed, muſt the cooleſt and the ſteadieſt minds have been at ſuch a ſcene? and much more enflamed enthuſiaſts, with whom the bitterneſs of diſappointment is ever proportioned to the extravagance of expectation, how unwilling muſt they be to reſume a hope, which had thus deplorably deceived them? how ſlow to re-imbark in a cauſe, thus plainly deſperate? Such muſt have been the neceſſary tenor of their minds[m]. And exactly conformable to this is the artleſs deſcription which the evangeliſts record, of the feelings and conduct of their brethren. When the two diſciples relate the crucifixion of their Lord, how full of perplexity and deſpondence is their narrative[n]. "*But we*, ſaid they, *truſted that it had been he which* "*ſhould have redeemed Iſrael*".—When aſſembled together, it was with the[o] *doors ſhut for fear of the Jews.*" —But this ſtate of doubt and diſmay was ſoon changed to triumphant faith, and theſe very men became witneſſes of the reſurrection of their crucified Lord.

By what means was this wondrous change atchieved? here it is the queſtion principally reſts. Was their faith in this great article the impulſe of enthu-

[m] Vid. this point very well illuſtrated by Dr. Archibald Campbell, in his diſcourſe, to prove the apoſtles were not enthuſiaſts, from p. 47 to 70.

[n] Luke xxiv. 21. [o] John xx. 19.

ſiaſm,

ſiaſm, or founded on the certainty of truth? Let us attend to the progreſs of this change.

Was it enthuſiaſm which moved them to reject the evidence of thoſe women, who had ſeen a viſion of angels, who ſaid he was alive [p], and who afterwards ſpoke to him in perſon [q]? Two of the apoſtles diſcovered, that the body was miſſing, but as yet they "*knew not the ſcripture, that he muſt riſe from the* "*dead;*" they retired wondering, not believing [r].

Could enthuſiaſm have deceived them into a belief, that a dead body no longer occupied the ſepulchre in which they had ſeen it lodged, and which they deliberately and minutely examined? how utterly impoſſible [s]! "He appeared to two ſeparately, but neither believed they them." Was this extreme ſlowneſs of faith a mark of enthuſiaſm? the very reverſe; it proves, that their minds were utterly void of every hope which might delude, and on their guard againſt every artifice that might deceive them.

But was it enthuſiaſm, to admit the evidence of their ſenſes, when they repeatedly ſaw, and felt, and

[p] Luke xxiv. 1—11. [q] Mark xvi. 11. [r] John xx. 1—19. Luke xxiv. 12. Mark xvi. 12.

[s] Paley's Evidences, p. 485, Dublin edition.—"The pre-"ſence and the abſence of the dead body, are alike inconſiſtent "with the hypotheſis of enthuſiaſm; for if preſent, it muſt "have cured their enthuſiaſm at once; if abſent, fraud, not "enthuſiaſm, muſt have carried it away."

ſpoke to their Lord reſtored to life, when he "[t] *eat* "*and drank before them*," when he invited them—"*behold my hands and my feet that it is I myſelf; "handle me and ſee, for a ſpirit hath not fleſh and "bones, as ye ſee me have*"—when he called unto Thomas, who declared, except "*I ſhall* [u] *ſee in his "hands, the print of the nails, and thruſt my hand "into his ſide, I will not believe.*" When even this proof was granted him, and extorted from the obſtinacy of his ſcepticiſm, the exclamation of "*my "Lord, and my God!*" When he performed miracles in their preſence—when "*for forty days toge-"ther he frequently converſed with them, expound-"ing the things which belong to the kingdom of God;*" and finally, in the ſight of all his apoſtles, aſcended into [x] heaven, there to remain at the right hand of the Majeſty on [y] high.

Was it enthuſiaſm to admit ſuch evidence as this, which nothing but blindneſs or frenzy could reject? —yet the proofs they received did not ceaſe here; forty days after they received the Spirit of God, deſcending with ſenſible ſigns, and reſting upon them.—"They were all with one accord in one "place, and ſuddenly there came a ſound, as of a "ruſhing mighty wind, and it filled all the houſe "where they were ſitting, and there appeared to "them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it ſat "upon each of them, and they were all filled with

[t] Luke xxiv. 36—43. [u] John xx. 24, 25. [x] Acts i. 3.
[y] Luke xxiv. 51. Acts i. 6.

"the

" the Holy Ghoſt, and began to ſpeak in other " tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance."—Now ſurely this communication of the Spirit of God, connected with the facts and the promiſes which prepared the apoſtles for its reception, and with the effects which teſtified its reality, ſtands on the cleareſt ground of certainty.

Could enthuſiaſm perſuade them to believe that they had ſuddenly acquired the knowledge of languages, which they had never learned? that they poſſeſſed the gift of healing, and exerciſed it upon multitudes? Still further, could enthuſiaſm perſuade them, that by " prayer and laying on of hands" God enabled them to obtain *for* [z] *others*, a portion of that ſupernatural knowledge and power which they themſelves poſſeſſed; and all this not for a ſhort time, but for the whole remaining period of their lives?—how wholly incredible that in this they could be miſtaken.

In [a] truth we muſt *admit* the teſtimony of the apoſtles to *all* the facts they relate, or *deny it in all*—all were inſeparably connected—all equally ſubmitted to the examination of their ſenſes, with this difference, that the miracles which determined them to maintain the divine authority of their crucified Lord, muſt have excited their attention more ſtrongly than any other parts of his life, becauſe in theſe they were moſt intereſted

[z] Acts viii. 14 to 17. xix. 6. [a] Vid. Campbell's Diſcourſe, p. 45.

not

not to be miſled; ſince error here involved them in the extremeſt perſecution and diſtreſs. Can we then believe they were enthuſiaſts in aſſerting the miracles, the reſurrection, the aſcenſion of their Lord, when they were as fully judges of theſe events, and had the very ſame opportunities of obſerving them, as his life, his actions, and his death?

What enthuſiaſm could ſo compleatly blind and ſubvert, not merely the reaſon, but every faculty, and every ſenſe, of ſuch a number of men, for ſuch a length of time, that they ſhould imagine that multitudes of diſeaſed perſons were inſtantaneouſly reſtored to health, who never were reſtored; that the lame were made to walk, the dumb to ſpeak, the blind to ſee, and even the dead to riſe to life; nay, imagine not only that all this was done, but that they were themſelves the perſons at whoſe word, and by whoſe agency theſe things were done.

To believe that any degree of enthuſiaſm could delude men to fancy theſe things for a ſeries of days, and months and years, in the moſt public towns and places, ſurrounded by crowds of friends and enemies—to believe this is ſurely the enthuſiaſm of credulity—utterly inconſiſtent with all truth and ſoberneſs of mind.

On

On this part of the argument it is, I truſt, evinced that the apoſtles were *at firſt* attached to their Lord, not by the blind impulſe of enthuſiaſm, but the ſtrong attraction of reaſon and evidence. That they every day were more firmly united to him by perpetually accumulated proofs of his ſtupendous power; and that they finally were conſcious of becoming themſelves the agents, by whom he diſpenſed his mercies to mankind. When therefore they were commanded by the high prieſts not to "ſpeak at all, or preach in the name of Jeſus"—well did they reply, not with the heat of enthuſiaſm, but the calm ſteadineſs of conſcious truth.—"*Whether it be right in the ſight of "God to hearken unto you more than unto God judge "ye; we cannot but ſpeak the things which we have "ſeen and heard.*"

CHAP.

CHAPTER II.

Containing arguments to prove that the apoſtles were not enthuſiaſts, from their not requiring faith in others without ſupplying ſufficient evidence to juſtify it.

SECTION I.

The apoſtles converted men not by enthuſiaſtic deluſions, but by working public and indiſputable MIRACLES.

IN the firſt chapter religious enthuſiaſm has been deſcribed as perpetually diſcernable by two primary and eſſential characters;—the 1ſt. credulity in believing without any, or at leaſt without ſufficient evidence, that a man's own mind is enlightened by divine inſpiration;—the 2d. preſumptuous dogmatiſm in demanding the ſubmiſſion of others to the dictates of this ſuppoſed divine authority, without exhibiting any clear or ſatisfactory proofs of its reality.

That the apoſtles and evangeliſts were free from the firſt of theſe characters, I endeavoured to eſtabliſh, by enumerating thoſe ſtriking proofs of divine wiſdom and power exhibited by their Lord, which firſt induced his diſciples to attend his inſtructions, and acknowledge his ſacred miſſion; and by ſtating the

the evidence addreſſed to their ſenſes and their reaſon, which ſupplied ſuch a firm conviction of his reſurrection and aſcenſion, that they devoted their lives to the promulgation of his goſpel, and did not hefitate to die as martyrs to its truth.

The very charge of enthuſiaſm implies ſincerity; and ſuch ſacrifices as the apoſtles ſubmitted to, infallibly prove they were ſincere; admitting therefore that they believed the facts which they atteſt, the only queſtion as to the ſource of their own conviction is, whether as to theſe facts they could have been deceived by any enthuſiaſtic deluſion? and that this was impoſſible, I truſt, has been evinced.

Let me now paſs to the *ſecond* character of enthuſiaſm, that of *demanding aſſent on inſufficient evidence.* In aſcribing this character to it, I am confirmed by the authority of the ſame profound reaſoner on the habits of the human mind, whom I have before quoted. Speaking of enthuſiaſm he obſerves, that "[b] the aſſuming an authority of dictating to others, "and a forwardneſs to preſcribe to their opinions, "is a conſtant concomitant of this bias of our "judgments; for how can it be otherwiſe but that "he ſhould be ready to impoſe on other men's be-"lief, who has already impoſed upon his own?"— Here again he diſtinguiſhes between the deluſions of

[b] Lock on enthuſiaſm, § 2.

enthuſiaſm,

enthuſiaſm, and the clear evidence of divine revelation.[c] "The holy men of old," ſays he, "who were "ſent to convince others, had a power given them to "juſtify the truth of their commiſſion, and by viſi-"ble ſigns to aſſert their divine authority."

On this ground the firſt teachers of the goſpel ſtand far removed from every ſuſpicion of enthuſiaſm.—Never did they claim aſſent merely on an unſupported aſſertion of being actuated by divine inſpiration—of having been driven by a ſudden and irreſiſtible impulſe—of having ſeen a divine light infuſed into their ſouls, needing no evidence but its own brightneſs. They did not appeal to obſcure and doubtful proofs, ſuch as agitations of mind, or convulſions of body, viſions by night, or ſecret whiſpers by day. No, they claimed the aſſent of mankind to doctrines eſtabliſhed by facts—facts which were themſelves miraculous, and direct proofs of a ſupernatural interference; or which exhibited the accompliſhment of prophecies, and thus evinced that divine Providence had introduced the ſcheme of which they formed a part.—Of theſe facts they had been themſelves eye-witneſſes, but they had not been the only witneſſes; frequently the events were moſt public and undeniable. —The reſurrection of our Lord, his ſubſequent converſe upon earth, and aſcent into Heaven, with the deſcent of the holy Spirit on the apoſtles, ſeem to have been the *only* leading facts, of which numbers,

[c] Lock. ib. § 15.

beſides

beſides Chriſtians, had not been witneſſes. Yet even theſe could not be termed *private* tranſactions; *five hundred perſons* had ſeen our Lord at once, of whom, ſays St. Paul, addreſſing the [d] Corinthians, "the greater part "remain unto this preſent."—And inſtantly on the deſcent of the Spirit, the apoſtles appeared in public; [e] "and when it was noiſed abroad the multitude came "together, for there were dwelling in Jeruſalem Jews, "devout men out of every nation under heaven, "Parthians and Medes, and Elamites, and the "dwellers in Meſopotamia and in Judea, in Pontus "and Aſia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in "the parts of Libya about Cyrene, ſtrangers of Rome, "Jews and Proſelytes, Cretes and Arabians, who "were all amazed hearing them ſpeak in their own "tongues the wonderful works of God."—Three thouſand perſons on one day added to the church, proved the certainty of the miraculous power which convinced their reaſon and eſtabliſhed their faith.

If a calm and ſteady appeal to plain and public events is ſuch a proof of truth and ſoberneſs, as enthuſiaſm never can produce, that proof the evangeliſts ſupplied.—Hear the language in which Peter addreſſed the aſſembled populace of Jeruſalem:—"Ye men "of Iſrael hear theſe words—Jeſus of Nazareth, a "man approved of God among you, by miracles, and "wonders, and ſigns, which God did by him in the "midſt of you, as YE YOURSELVES ALSO KNOW: him

[d] 1. Corinth. xv. 6. [e] Acts ii. 1 to 13.

being

" being delivered by the determinate counſel and " foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and with " wicked hands have crucified and ſlain; this Jeſus " hath God raiſed from the dead, whereof WE ALL " ARE WITNESSES [f]". Exactly the ſame is their language before the Jewiſh people, again collected by the [g] fame of a new miracle,—[h] before the prieſts and elders, the rulers and ſcribes, aſſembled in council, to try and puniſh them,—[i] before Cornelius, a Roman Centurion, who dwelt at Cæſarea, not many miles diſtant from Jeruſalem, who had called together his kinſmen and near friends, to receive the glad tidings of the goſpel. In every place, and before every audience, they repeat this language; and ſurely this is the language of manly reaſon and conſcious truth, not of folly and fanaticiſm.

Yet convincing and rational as was the appeal to paſt facts, it was not the only evidence from which the apoſtles claimed the aſſent of mankind to the goſpel.—They had been choſen as peculiar witneſſes of the reſurrection of their Lord; the credit of this fact therefore muſt have reſted ſolely on their own veracity; and in diſtant countries the whole ſeries of facts appealed to, muſt have been unknown. Now, though they undoubtedly eſtabliſhed their veracity upon the firmeſt ground, by teaching a doctrine of piety and purity, and ſubmitting to diſtreſs and dan-

[f] Acts ii. 22—24 and 32.
[g] Acts iii. 13—18.
[h] Acts iv. 1—12.
[i] Acts x. 36—43.

ger

ger of the ſevereſt kind in its ſupport; yet they were frequently enabled to evince their truth, and divine miſſion, by proofs more ſtriking than any paſt tranſaction however notorious; by preſent miracles; by a direct appeal to the ſenſes of their hearers.

They appealed to the effuſions of the holy Spirit, proved at the moment by the miraculous gift of [k] tongues—"*God, ſays the apoſtle, has ſhed forth that* "*which ye now ſee and hear;*" they appealed to the man at that moment healed, whom all the people knew "to be the ſame who had been daily laid at the "gate of the temple, to ſeek for alms, having been "lame from his mother's womb; but whom they "now, full of wonder and amazement, ſaw walk-"ing and leaping, and praiſing God."

When Peter by a word reſtored to inſtant health, "*Eneas, who for eight years had been confined to his* "*bed*"[l]—"all that dwelt at Lydda and Saron ſaw "him, who turned to the Lord."—Not leſs public was his raiſing Dorcas from death [m], "*which was* "*known throughout all Joppa, ſo that many believed* "*in the Lord.*"

When at [n] Lyſtra, Paul with ſupernatural power, commanded one who had been a cripple from his birth, to riſe and ſtand; and perfect ſtrength was

[k] Acts iii. 1—16. [l] Acts ix. 32—35. [m] Acts ix. from 36 to the end. [n] Acts xiv. from 8—18.

inſtantly

inſtantly beſtowed on him. So public and ſignal was the act, that the multitude of ſpectators exclaimed, the "Gods are come down to us in the likeneſs of "men," and ſcarcely were reſtrained from offering to them ſacrifices as to Gods.

But theſe particular inſtances are but a few, incidentally recorded, from a multitude, [o] wrought by different apoſtles in different countries, and for conſiderable periods of time. By all the apoſtles at Jeruſalem "*were many ſigns and wonders wrought among the people, ſo that there came a multitude out of the cities round about unto Jeruſalem, bringing ſick folks, and them which were vexed with unclean ſpirits, and they were healed every one.*

At Samaria, where Philip ſpread the goſpel, [p] "*and* "*the people with one accord gave heed to thoſe things* "*which he ſpake, hearing and ſeeing the miracles which* "*he did.*"

At Epheſus, by Paul, for a period of [q] *two years*, "*ſo that all they which dwelt in Aſia heard the word of* "*the Lord Jeſus, both Jews and Greeks, and God* "*wrought ſpecial miracles by the hands of Paul.*"— At [r] Corinth, at [s] Theſſalonica, cities which were at that period moſt diſtinguiſhed and enlightened, and

[o] Acts v. 12. 16. [p] Acts viii. 6. [q] Acts xix. 10. 12.

[r] Vid. 1 Cor. ii. 4. with the 12th, 13th, and 14th chapters.

[s] Vid. 1 Theſſ. i. 5, 6. & v. 19, 20. and Benſon's Hiſtory of the

and therefore the moſt unlikely to be miſled by the deluſions of fanataciſm.

On this part of my ſubject, the miracles of the apoſtles, and particularly of St. Paul, have been placed by a diſtinguiſhed writer, treating on the ſame ſubject, in ſo clear a light, that I cannot avoid availing myſelf of his ideas. I allude to the celebrated Lord Lyttleton, in his ſhort but excellent treatiſe on the converſion of St. Paul,—[t] "I could enter," ſays he, "into a particular examination of all the miracles recorded in the Acts to have been wrought by St. Paul, and ſhew they were not of a nature in which enthuſiaſm, either in him or the perſons he worked them upon, or the ſpectators, could have any part. When he told Elymas, the ſorcerer, at Paphos, before the Roman deputy, [u] that the *hand of God was upon him*, and he *ſhould be blind, not ſeeing the ſun for a ſeaſon; and immediately there fell on him a miſt and a darkneſs, and he went about ſeeking ſome to lead him by the hand*—had enthuſiaſm in the doer or the ſufferer any ſhare in this act? If Paul, as an enthuſiaſt, had thrown out this menace, and the effect had not followed; inſtead of converting the deputy, as we are told he did, he would

the firſt planting of Chriſtianity, Book 3. Chap. v. § 5. vol. 2. p. 100. 2d edit. Lond. 1756.

[t] Lord Lyttleton's Obſervation on the converſion of St. Paul, printed in Dublin by G. Faulkner, 1747, p. 59.

[u] Acts xiii. 11.

"have

" have drawn on himſelf his rage and contempt;
" but the effect upon Elymas could not be cauſed by
" enthuſiaſm in Paul, much leſs can it be imputed to
" an enthuſiaſtic belief in that perſon himſelf, of
" his being ſtruck blind, when he was not, by the
" words of a man, whoſe preaching he ſtrenuouſly
" and bitterly oppoſed; nor can we aſcribe the con-
" verſion of Sergius which followed, to any enthuſi-
" aſm—a Roman proconſul was not likely to be an
" enthuſiaſt; but had he been one, he muſt have
" been bigotted to his own Gods, and therefore the
" leſs inclined to believe any miraculous power in the
" apoſtle.

" [x] When at Troas, a young man, named Euty-
" chus, fell down from a high window in the third
" loft, and was taken up dead, while St. Paul was
" preaching; could any enthuſiaſm, either in Paul
" or the congregation then preſent, make them be-
" lieve, that by the apoſtle's falling on him and em-
" bracing him, he was reſtored to life? or, could
" he, who was ſo reſtored, contribute any thing to it
" himſelf by any power of his own imagination?—
" Aſſuredly not.

" Further, the power of working miracles was
" not confined to St. Paul, it was alſo communicated
" to the churches he planted in different parts of the

[x] Acts xx 9.

" world."

" world." In many paſſages of his epiſtles to the [y] Corinthians, he tells them, " *that to ſome among* " *them was given the gift of healing by the Spirit of God;* " *to others, the working of other miracles; to others,* " *divers kinds of tongues:* [y] and gives directions for " their more orderly uſe in their aſſemblies." Now let me appeal to the unbiaſſed reaſon of every man, and entreat him to reflect, whether ſuch an addreſs as this is not utterly irreconcileable with every ſuppoſition, either of enthuſiaſm or artifice. " Suppoſe for " a moment St. Paul, and the perſons he addreſſed, " were artful deceivers, how utterly ridiculous would it have been in an epiſtle *addreſſed to them* and *for their own uſe*, to adviſe them not to value themſelves too highly on theſe gifts, to pray for one rather than another, and to prefer charity to all,—to appeal to their paſt experience, and aſſert, " the ſigns of " an apoſtle have been wrought amongſt you in ſigns " and wonders, and mighty deeds;"—and this when it appears that at that very period, there were ſome amongſt thoſe whom he addreſſed, who envied the reſpect which the apoſtle enjoyed amongſt his Corinthian converts, who laboured to diſparage his character, and undermine his authority.—How abſurd and impolitic would ſuch an appeal in ſuch circumſtances have been—how utterly inconſiſtent with every idea of fraud or artifice, and ſurely not leſs inconſiſtent with the nature of enthuſiaſm.—" If in-

[y] 1 Cor. 12th, 14th and 15th chap. Lord Lyttleton's Obſervations, &c. p. 61.

" deed the apoſtle had told the Corinthians, that " they were inſpired by the Spirit of God, in ſome " ineffable manner, which they alone could under- " ſtand, but which did not diſcover itſelf by any " outward diſtinct operations, they might miſtake " the impulſe of enthuſiaſm for the inſpiration of " the holy Ghoſt; but they could not believe, " againſt the conviction of their own minds, that " they ſpoke languages they did not ſpeak, or healed " diſtempers they did not heal, or worked other mi- " racles when they worked none: undoubtedly if the " Corinthians were not fully aſſured that ſuch mira- " culous powers had been, and were ſtill exerciſed " amongſt them, they muſt have regarded the author " of that epiſtle as a wild and frantic viſionary, in- " ſtead of revering him as an apoſtle of God.

I ſhall conclude this view of the miracles wrought by the apoſtles with ſome general obſervations of the ſame eminent writer on this argument, which ſeem peculiarly important and deciſive.

yy " Suppoſe that enthuſiaſm could make a man think " that he was able by a word or a touch to give ſight " to the blind, motion to the lame, or life to the " dead; would that conceit of his make the blind " ſee, the lame walk, or the dead revive; and if it " did not, how could he perſiſt in ſuch an opinion,

yy Vid. Lyttleton on Converſ. of St. Paul. p. 62, 63.

" or

" or upon his perſiſting eſcape being ſhut up for a
" madman; but ſuch a madneſs could not infect ſo
" *many at once* as St. Paul ſuppoſes at Corinth to have
" been endowed with the gift of healing, or any
" other miraculous power.

" One of the miracles which they pretended to,
" was the ſpeaking of languages they had never
" learnt, and St. Paul ſays he poſſeſſed this gift
" *more than them all.* If this had been a deluſion of
" fancy—if they had ſpoken only gibberiſh, or un-
" meaning ſounds, it would ſoon have appeared
" when they came to make uſe of it, where it was
" neceſſary, viz. in converting thoſe who underſtood
" not any language, they naturally ſpoke; St. Paul,
" particularly, who travelled ſo far upon that deſign,
" and had ſuch occaſion to uſe it, muſt ſoon have
" diſcovered that this imaginary gift of the Spirit
" was no gift at all, but a ridiculous inſtance of fren-
" zy which had poſſeſſed both him and them.—But if
" thoſe he ſpoke to in divers tongues underſtood
" what he ſaid, and were converted to Chriſt by that
" means, how could it be a deluſion?—Of all the
" miracles recorded in ſcripture, none are more clear
" from any poſſible imputation of being the effect of
" an enthuſiaſtic imagination than this; for how
" could any man think he had it, if he had it not? or
" if he did think ſo, not be undeceived when he came
" to put his gift to the proof? accordingly I do not
" find ſuch a power to have been pretended to by any
" enthuſiaſt, ancient or modern.

" If then St. Paul and the church of Corinth were " not deceived, in aſcribing to themſelves this mira- " culous power, but really had it, there is the " ſtrongeſt reaſon to think that neither were they " deceived in the other powers to which they pre- " tended; as the ſame Spirit which gave them that, " equally could, and probably would, give them the " others, to ſerve the ſame holy ends for which that " was given; and by conſequence St. Paul was no " enthuſiaſt in what he wrote on that head to the " Corinthians, nor in other ſimilar inſtances, when " he aſcribes to himſelf, or the churches which he " founded, any ſupernatural graces or gifts. Indeed " they who would impute to imagination, effects " ſuch as thoſe which St. Paul imputes to the " power of God attending his miſſion, muſt aſcribe " to imagination the ſame omnipotence which he " aſcribes to God."

SECTION

SECTION II.

The arguments from PROPHECY *adduced by the apoſtles could not derive their weight from the influence of enthuſiaſm—proved in this ſection, ſo far as relates to the prophecies of the old teſtament, which the apoſtles aſſerted were accompliſhed in the perſon of our Saviour.*

IF from miracles we paſs to the other mode by which the firſt preachers of Chriſtianity convinced their diſciples, even the argument from prophecy—it will, I truſt, appear that this was equally incapable of deriving its efficacy from any enthuſiaſtic deluſion.

This argument, as uſed by the apoſtles, almoſt entirely conſiſted in appeals to the Jewiſh ſcriptures, in which the apoſtles contended were clear prophecies, fulfilled by the life and ſufferings of their Lord, who, according to them, united in himſelf all the characters by which the promiſed Meſſiah was to be diſtinguiſhed.

It would be inconſiſtent with the ſubject of this eſſay, to enter into a detail of the arguments employed to prove this concluſion; but without any ſuch detail it is, I think, obvious that this was a ſpecies of argument

argument which could not derive either its origin or ſucceſs from the influence of fanaticiſm.

The prophecies to which the firſt preachers of Chriſtianity appealed, not only exiſted, at the lateſt, [z] two hundred and fifty years before their aſſerted accompliſhment, but exiſted in the hands of their inveterate enemies, the Jewiſh ſcribes, prieſts, and Phariſees.—Over theſe records they had no power; they could not themſelves believe, nor make their hearers believe, that theſe prophecies exiſted, if they did not exiſt, nor could they alter the ſmalleſt item to adapt them to the events, by which it was aſſerted they were fulfilled.

And as the prophecies were in no degree in their power, ſo neither was it poſſible for them to direct the correſpondent events; for theſe had all taken place before the apoſtles began to preach the reſurrection of their divine Maſter; and they had many of them been brought about by the agency of his enemies, who had been the authors of his ſufferings and death, which the apoſtles ſteadily maintained were plain accompliſhments of acknowledged prophecies. —Still further, theſe tranſactions were of ſo public

[z] "*Two hundred and fifty years,*" it is generally admitted that the Jewiſh ſcriptures were tranſlated into Greek, at the deſire of Ptolemy Philadelphus, king of Egypt, and copies of them depoſited in the Alexandrian library at leaſt two hundred and fifty years before Chriſt.

a nature

a nature, they had it as little in their power to miſrepreſent, as originally to direct them.

But what is moſt important of all, the apoſtles could find no pre-diſpoſition in any Jewiſh mind to admit the coincidence of the prophecy and the event, inſtantaneouſly, and embrace it enthuſiaſtically, becauſe ſuch an accompliſhment was totally the reverſe of that which Jewiſh minds had long expected and ardently wiſhed.—The interpretation which the apoſtles gave the prophecies, and the facts to which they applied them, were ſuch as ſhocked the national prejudices and the religious bigotry of their countrymen.

The Jews expected a temporal and triumphant Meſſiah, who was to appear ſuddenly in the temple, in the ſplendor of divine Majeſty, and to live for ever.—The apoſtles offered to their acceptance a peaſant, the reputed ſon of a carpenter, who lived a life of poverty, who had periſhed on the croſs, and declared, as the event proved, that his kingdom was not of this world. The Jews expected that this Meſſiah would extend and perpetuate the rites and ceremonies of the moſaic law.—The apoſtles contended that he had weakened or annulled its obligation, and ſubſtituted in its room, a religion aboliſhing theſe rites and ceremonies. The Jews confined to themſelves the title and privileges of the choſen people of God. The

apoſtles

apoſtles contended, that now the period was arrived, foretold by the prophets, when God ſhould be " [a] ſought of them that aſked not for him, when he " ſhould be found of them that ſought him not; " that he ſhould ſay, behold me, behold me, unto a " nation that was not called by his name."—When that was become true which was propheſied of Iſrael, —" I have ſpread out my hands all day unto a re- " bellious people, which walked in a way that was " not good;" when their ſhould be " no difference " between the Jew and the Greek; for the ſame " Lord over all, is rich unto all that call upon him; " and whoſoever ſhall call upon the name of the " Lord, ſhould be ſaved."

Now, without entering into any minute proofs to ſhew the Jews were wrong, and the apoſtles right, in this interpretation of the prophecies, it ſeems to be clear beyond all reaſonable doubt, that this *mode of interpretation* could not have been originally adopted by the apoſtles, or received by the converts merely from the force of enthuſiaſm.

[b] Reaſon and experience prove, that thoſe doctrines which fanatics embrace, are generally ſuch as have been grounded on ſome pre-conceived religious opinions, ſuch as have been long the ſubject of attention,

[a] Iſaiah lxv. 1, 2. Rom. x. 12 to 20.

[b] Vid. Dr. Campbell's Diſcourſe on Enthuſiaſm, p. 17, 18, and 19,

anxiety,

anxiety, and prayer; but it is highly improbable that men ſhould, without any intervening cauſe, become on a ſudden enthuſiaſts on points they had never thought on before—much more in favour of opinions, againſt which they had been violently prejudiced, from the firſt dawn of reaſon, by habit, inſtruction, religion and example; yet ſuch opinions the Jews muſt have embraced before they could have admitted the crucified Jeſus for the Meſſiah, whom the prophets had foretold: it is, I contend for it, very incredible that blind enthuſiaſm could have any weight in this caſe, except *againſt* the reception of ſuch opinions. The warm and bigotted Jew would inſtantly reject, and, I may ſay, enthuſiaſtically oppoſe them. The only proceſs by which he could be induced to admit the truth of the goſpel, was the moſt ſober, deliberate, and argumentative, which can be imagined; requiring an accurate examination of the prophetic writings, and a cloſe compariſon of their contents, with the character and hiſtory of our bleſſed Lord.

The queſtions which muſt ariſe on ſuch an enquiry, were ſurely ſuch as are moſt remote from the influence of fanatic deluſion. Whether Jeſus Chriſt was born of the tribe of Judah, of the family of David, in the town of Bethlehem?—whether his character and doctrines were clearly delineated, his crucifixion and reſurrection foretold in the prophecies?—whether it was a miſinterpretation of theſe

facred

ſacred writers, to expect on their authority a temporal Meſſiah. Theſe queſtions, and a variety of others ſuch as theſe, muſt immediately preſent themſelves on the firſt appeal to the argument from prophecy, and to decide them in favour of Chriſtianity, required a patient attention, and a ſobriety of mind, which were utterly repugnant to the very nature of enthuſiaſm.

Suitably to theſe principles, we find in the hiſtory of the firſt progreſs of the goſpel, that thoſe, and thoſe only, who would liſten to reaſoning, who impartially and carefully examined the ſcriptures, were influenced by the apoſtle's appeal to them.—When at [c] Antioch, in Piſidia, Paul in the ſynagogue, after the reading the law and the prophets, ſtood up to explain what had been read; his diſcourſe exhibits a view of the entire Jewiſh hiſtory, and critical explanations of ſome paſſages of ſcripture, as remote from the wildneſs of enthuſiaſm, as can be conceived. The Jews on that day liſtened with attention, and many of them, as well as of the religious proſelytes, [d] followed the apoſtles, who ſpeaking to them, perſuaded them to continue in the grace of God. But when the Gentiles wiſhed to hear the ſame arguments, and when on the next ſabbath-day almoſt the whole city aſſembled together to hear the word of the preachers, the bigotry of the Jews would no

[c] Acts xiii. 14. [d] Acts xiii. 43.

longer

longer bear the eagerneſs of their [e] intruſion, "ſee-"ing the multitudes they were filled with envy, and "ſpeak againſt thoſe things which were ſpoken by "Paul, contradicting and blaſpheming," and by their oppoſition raiſed ſuch perſecution againſt the apoſtles, as compelled them to ſave their lives by flight; nor was this fury appeaſed even by their flight, for they purſued the apoſtle to Iconium and Lyſtra, till they had, as they hoped, inflicted that vengeance which their enraged bigotry required; for at Lyſtra [f] they "perſuaded the people, and "having ſtoned Paul, drew him out of the city, "ſuppoſing he had been dead."

The characters of enthuſiaſm are precipitation and violence; theſe uniformly contributed not to forward, but to oppoſe the ſucceſs of the firſt preachers of Chriſtianity.

If the Jews at [g] Berea were influenced by the rea-ſoning of the apoſtles, "ſo that many of them be-"lieved, alſo of honourable women that were Greeks, "and of men not a few,"—it was becauſe they not only "received the word with all readineſs of mind," but *ſearched the ſcriptures daily*, whether theſe things were ſo.

In truth it ſeems to me difficult in the extreme, to peruſe the epiſtles to the Hebrews, the Romans, and

[e] Acts xiii. 45. [f] Acts xiv. 19. [g] Acts xvii. 10.

the

the Galatians, in all which this argument from the prophecies, and the general ſcope of the Jewiſh diſpenſation is largely applied, to confirm and illuſtrate the goſpel, without obſerving a clearneſs of thought, an extent of information, and a ſobriety of intellect, utterly repugnant to the character of enthuſiaſm. The ignorant and ſuperficial may deride, becauſe they do not underſtand ſuch reaſoning; but the ſerious and ſober enquirer will trace its coherence, and admire its ſtrength.

Admitting the truth of theſe principles, we cannot wonder at the confidence with which St. Paul urged this topic of argument, before King Agrippa, whom he knew to be poſſeſſed of information which qualified him to judge of its force.—" [h] *I think myſelf happy,* " *king Agrippa, becauſe I ſhall anſwer for myſelf this* " *day before thee, eſpecially becauſe I know thee to be* " *expert in all cuſtoms and queſtions among the Jews;* " *wherefore I beſeech thee to hear me patiently.*" This is ſurely not the language of a deluded and wild viſionary.—*No*—ſuch men appeal to the tribunal of ignorance alone, and rely for ſucceſs on the folly and the precipitance of their hearers. Not ſo the apoſtle, his was the cauſe of truth and ſoberneſs; he rejoiced to appeal to an enlightened and rational judge.—" I continue, ſays he, unto this day witneſ-" ſing both to ſmall and great, ſaying none other

[h] Acts xxvi. the whole chapter.

" things,

" things than thoſe which the prophets and Moſes " did ſay ſhould come; that Chriſt ſhould ſuffer, " and that he ſhould be the firſt that ſhould riſe " from the dead, and ſhould ſhew light unto the " people and the Gentiles." When the ignorance of the Roman governor led him to exclaim, " Paul, " too much learning hath made thee mad." How calm and rational the reply!—" I am not mad, moſt " noble Feſtus, but ſpeak the words of truth and " ſoberneſs; for the king knoweth of theſe things, " before whom I alſo ſpeak freely, for I am per- " ſuaded none of theſe things are hid from him, " for this thing was not done in a corner. King " Agrippa believeſt thou the prophets? I know that " thou believeſt."—Does the king's reply diſavow either the notoriety of the facts thus atteſted, or the validity of the argument from prophecy?—" *Almoſt*, " *ſaid Agrippa, thou perſuadeſt me to be a Chriſtian.*" More he could not have admitted without becoming wholly a Chriſtian; and this was morally impoſſible, that a proud and voluptuous Jewiſh monarch ſhould, at the hazard of his crown, embrace the faith of an upſtart, a deſpiſed and hated ſect, the founder of which had been crucified, and the chief preacher of which appeared before him a priſoner, loaded with chains and obloquy; this could not be without ſome ſupernatural change, violently and irreſiſtibly over- powering every feeling of his ſoul, and ſubverting his whole moral character, and we never find mira- cles employed to work ſuch a change as this. But

would

would a wild enthuſiaſt have been able to adduce evidence ſtrong enough to extort ſuch an admiſſion from ſuch an opponent?—would a ſenſeleſs fanatic have been able to uſe this admiſſion with ſuch conſummate addreſs, united with ſuch manly firmneſs and unaffected dignity, as the apoſtle diſplayed in his reply? For Paul ſaid—" *I would to God that not only* " *thou, but all who hear me this day, were both almoſt* " *and altogether ſuch as I am, except theſe bonds,*"—No—to attribute ſuch reaſoning and ſuch conduct to the wild ravings of enthuſiaſm, is to outrage every feeling of nature, and every principle of truth.

Thus it has, I truſt, been ſhewn, that the main argument from prophecy was as remote in its origin from enthuſiaſtic deluſion, and as incapable of combining with, or deriving ſtrength and ſucceſs from fanaticiſm in its progreſs, as the proof which miracles ſupplied: in truth, theſe two modes of proof were inſeparably connected together; [1] " there could " have been no poſſible pretence for ſuppoſing, " that Jeſus of Nazareth, an obſcure peaſant, who " had no one of theſe external characters the Jews " notoriouſly expected in their Meſſiah, and all evi- " dence about whom was cloſed by his death; there " could, I ſay, have been no pretence for aſſerting " ſuch a character was the promiſed Redeemer, of

[1] Vid. Paley's Evidence of Chriſtianity, p. 87, Dublin edit. where this argument is moſt clearly enforced.

" whom

" whom ſuch oppoſite and ſuch magnificent expec-
" tations had been conceived, except his extraordi-
" nary works had marked him out as an extraordi-
" nary perſonage."—The argument from prophecy, therefore, could not for a moment have been liſtened to, except attention had been excited to it by the notoriety of the miracles; but when attended to, it ſupplied a new ſource of proof, which calm reaſon alone could advance or comprehend.

Hence it is we find the firſt preachers of the goſpel perpetually uniting theſe two arguments, to convince their Jewiſh converts; but it is extremely important to remark, that they urged theſe arguments on different deſcriptions of their hearers, exactly as they were capable of feeling their force.—To the Jews it was that they moſt frequently and earneſtly urged the argument from the prophetic writings, becauſe they admitted their authority, were familiarized to their language, and therefore prepared to underſtand their true meaning.—While to the heathens they generally argued, from the miracles they themſelves beheld, or might be aſſured of by evidence of moſt unqueſtionable certainty; and from the [k] truths of natural religion, which were congenial to the reaſon and the feelings of every human mind, contraſted with the abſurd and pernicious nature of their idolatry.

[k] Vide St. Paul's addreſſes to the heathens, at Lyſtra, Acts xiv. and to the court of Areopagus, at Athens, Acts xvii.

Now,

Now, let me aſk, does not this mode of conducting their cauſe, prove not only that it was founded on reaſon, but that it was ſupported with ſobriety of mind? The precipitate and blind zeal of enthuſiaſm would not attend to ſuch a diſtinction as this; artifice and impoſture would not thus ſubmit to every hearer, principally thoſe arguments which each would be moſt eaſily able to examine, and therefore if they were fallacious, moſt likely to refute. Aſſuredly then the apoſtles ſpoke the words of truth and ſoberneſs.

SECTION III.

The prophecies delivered by our Saviour, and ſuch Predictions of the apoſtles as are connected with them, are not imputable to enthuſiaſm.

ON this ſubject of the argument from prophecy, as applied by its firſt preachers, to ſpread or to eſtabliſh the belief of the goſpel, it is neceſſary to obſerve further, that not only the appeal to the Jewiſh ſcriptures, on which the argument principally depended, could not derive its origin or ſucceſs from enthuſiaſm; but that the predictions which are aſcribed to our Lord, by the evangeliſts, as well as ſome inſtances of prophecies delivered by his followers, are remarkably

bly free from every ſuſpicion of having been dictated by the ſpirit of fanaticiſm.

I readily will admit that enthuſiaſts are prone to miſtake the chimeras of a diſordered fancy for the viſions of a prophetic illumination, and to claim credit to the rhapſodies they pour forth, as divine predictions of unqueſtionable certainty; but ſuch a claim can gain little credit, except their authority has been by ſome other means previouſly eſtabliſhed. If the fanatic ventures to foretel events immediately approaching, the failure of the prediction will ſoon deſtroy the authority of the prophet. If he pretends to penetrate into remote futurity, he will be unable to ſatisfy his hearers that he utters inſpired predictions, becauſe they cannot witneſs their accompliſhment, and muſt therefore have ſome different proof of his inſpiration to induce them to give credence to his words.—Thus it ſeems extremely improbable that an unſupported claim to a prophetic character, though it may originate in enthuſiaſm, ſhould ſucceed in ſpreading it; becauſe the claim to a divine authority is thus reduced to a trial it will ſeldom be able to endure, a compariſon of predictions with facts.

But if for argument ſake we ſhould admit that the enthuſiaſt may accidentally deſcribe ſome deluſive viſion of fancy, which yet may ſeem to be verified by ſome ſubſequent event; or that he may conjecture

ſome probable occurrence, and deliver this conjecture in prophetic language, to which he is habituated: yet experience proves, that we may always diſcover in the nature of the ſuppoſed prophecy, or of its accompliſhment, ſome traces of fallacy or extravagance. The prediction is vague and general, or the event ſuch as might be eaſily produced, and therefore eaſily foreſeen—frequently ſo trifling, we cannot conceive it ſhould be worthy of divine interference to preſignify it—frequently ſo obſcure and uncertain, that if we admit the genuineneſs of the prophecy, we cannot prove its agreement with the event by which it is aſſerted to have been accompliſhed.

The prophecies aſcribed to our Lord ſeem remarkably free from theſe objections. One is, the [l] prediction of the total deſtruction of the city and temple of Jeruſalem, ſo total that "[m] not one ſtone ſhould "be left upon another that ſhould not be thrown "down;" attended with circumſtances of unequalled miſery—"[n] for then ſhall there be great tribulation, "ſuch as was not ſince the beginning of the world "to this time, no, nor ever ſhall be; [o] then ſhall "be great diſtreſs upon the land, and wrath upon "this people, and they ſhall fall by the edge of the "ſword, and ſhall be led away captive into all nations, and Jeruſalem ſhall be trodden down of the

[l] Vid. Matt. xxiv. Mark xiii. Luke xxi. [m] Luke xxi. 6.
[n] Matt. xxiv. 21. [o] Luke xxi. 24.

"Gentiles,

" Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be ful-
" filled."

The period when theſe events were to take place, is alſo clearly pointed out, and deſcribed as immediately approaching. " [p] *This generation ſhall not paſs* " *away till all theſe things be fulfilled;* heaven and " earth ſhall paſs away, but my words ſhall not paſs " away."—Finally, this prediction is accompanied with a warning to his diſciples, to fly from theſe impending calamities.—" [q] *When ye ſhall ſee Jeruſalem* " *compaſſed with armies, then know that the deſolation* " *thereof is nigh; then let them which are in Judea* " *flee unto the mountains, and let them which are in* " *the midſt of it depart out, and let not thoſe who are* " *in the countries enter therein.*"

Now that this prediction ſhould proceed from an enthuſiaſtic mind, cannot ſurely be reaſonably ſuppoſed. The Jews had now been long in the habit of ſubmitting peaceably to the Roman yoke; the polity of Rome at this period was remarkably diſpoſed to allow to its various ſubject nations, the undiſturbed enjoyment of their religion and their laws, and to preſerve, even in war, every diſtinguiſhed city, and every magnificent ſtructure, as ornaments of its dominion, and proofs of the greatneſs of its power; ſuch an event therefore as the *total deſtruction* of the

[p] Matt. xxiv. 34. Luke xxi. 22. [q] Luke xxi. 30. Matt. xxiv. 15.

city, and the temple of Jeruſalem, by the Romans, was moſt highly improbable within any period of time; but that it ſhould happen at a preciſe and ſhort diſtance, even "*before that generation paſſed away*," ſurely no human ingenuity could foreſee; yet it certainly took place with circumſtances of ſtrange and unexampled miſery.

If it be ſaid, that this prediction was falſely aſcribed to our Lord by the evangeliſts, this ſuppoſes them to have been, not wild enthuſiaſts, but artful and deliberate impoſtors; a ſuppoſition utterly irreconcileable with the whole tenor of their writings and their lives, and which in this inſtance ſeems extremely improbable, from the [r] internal ſtructure of the

[r] Archdeacon Paley in his excellent view of the evidences, part 2d. ch. i. § 2. has adduced many ſtrong arguments to confirm the exiſtence of this prophecy before the event. 1ſt. From all antiquity concurring to aſſign the three firſt goſpels a date prior to the deſtruction of Jeruſalem. 2d. The apoſtles muſt have been very far advanced in life at that time, and no reaſon can be given for their delaying ſo long the publication of the goſpels. 3d. From there being no hint in either, that the prophecy was fulfilled. 4th. From the admonitions to the Chriſtions. 5th. If the prophecies had been compoſed after the event, there would have been more *ſpecification*. That theſe prophecies could not have been interpolated, is ſtrongly confirmed by Jortin, in his remarks on eccleſiaſtical hiſtory, vol. 1. p. 72. edit. 1751, amongſt his reaſons are—1ſt. Becauſe they are incidentally placed up and down the goſpels by way of parable, or in anſwer to queſtions, or on account of ſome circumſtances of time or place bringing on the diſcourſe—he quotes

the prediction itſelf, for it included a warning to the Chriſtians to flee from the ruin of Jeruſalem, the approach of which it taught them to diſcover by certain ſigns. Suppoſe then this prediction and this warning never to have been publiſhed till after the event, how plainly would it have carried with it its own falſification? how naturally would the whole body of Jewiſh Chriſtians have demanded of the apoſtles, "why was this prophecy and this warning concealed "till *after* the calamity againſt which it was deſigned "to guard us, had taken place? and why is it "now *firſt* brought forward, when the time of its "utility has paſſed, and its divine origin can no lon-"ger be aſcertained? And this when it did not "exiſt in any written record, which might be ſup-"poſed to have lain till now undiſcovered, but was "delivered (according to your own account) to you, "thea poſtles, ſurely for the purpoſe of preſerving, "by forewarning, your brethren."

Again—with this prophecy our Lord unites a clear deſcription of the perſecutions which his immediate followers ſhould ſuſtain:—"[s] Before all theſe things

quotes the following texts:—Matt. x. 23.—xv. 13.—xvi. 28.—xxi. 29.—xxi. 41.—xxii. 7.—xxiii. 36. Luke xi. 50.—xiii. 5. xiii. 9.—xvii. 24.—xix. 27.—xix. 42.—xxiii. 28. John v. 21. xxi. 22. 2d, Becauſe no Jews or Pagans ever reproached the Chriſtians with inſerting theſe prophecies. Other reaſons of his I have adopted in the text, and endeavoured to confirm and improve.

[s] Luke xxi. 12—16—17.

"they

" they ſhall lay their hands on you, and perſecute " you, delivering you up to the ſynagogues and " unto priſons, being brought before kings and " rulers for my name's ſake; and ye ſhall be be- " trayed both by parents, and brethren, and kins- " folks, and friends, and ſome of you ſhall they " cauſe to be put to death, and ye ſhall be hated by " all men for my name's ſake." [t] Now, if theſe perſecutions did not exiſt, would impoſtors be mad enough to aſcribe ſuch predictions to their maſter, and without any conceivable motive make him a prophet of falſehoods, though the ſucceſs of their own ſuppoſed ſchemes depended on the reception of his divine authority?—If theſe perſecutions exiſted, what could induce impoſtors to ſuſtain them? and impoſtors they muſt have been if they falſely aſcribed theſe predictions to their Lord; or, what could enable them to maintain their cauſe againſt ſuch perſecution? And was it not totally inconſiſtent with the nature of fraud and impoſture, to accompany the ſuppoſed prediction of theſe perſecutions with ſuch advice, and ſuch a promiſe as the following?—" [u] When " they ſhall lead you and deliver you up, take no " thought before hand what ye ſhall ſpeak, neither " do ye premeditate, but what ſhall be given you in " that hour, that ſpeak ye; for it is not ye that " ſpeak, but the Holy Ghoſt. And I will give you

[t] Vid. Paley's Evidence, part 1ſt. ch. iii. § 1.

[u] Luke xxi. 14, 15 and 16.

a mouth,

" a mouth, and wiſdom, which all your adverſaries " ſhall not be able to gainſay, or reſiſt."

The very obſcurity of ſome parts of this prophecy ſeems as inconſiſtent with fraud, as the plainneſs and exact accompliſhment of others is unaccountable, on the ſuppoſition of fanaticiſm. An impoſtor writing *after* the event, would take care not to diminiſh the credit of his ſuppoſed prediction, by leaving its application *doubtful* or obſcure; yet it is certain many Chriſtians did very early ſo far miſtake this prophecy, as to apply it not only to the deſtruction of Jeruſalem, but alſo to the end of the world; and to expect the immediate approach of the final judgment, an error which St. Peter and St. Paul in different paſſages expreſsly and earneſtly correct, and in a manner totally remote from every appearance of enthuſiaſm or impoſture. Enthuſiaſts would more probably cheriſh than detect ſuch a deluſion, calculated as it was to make a deep religious impreſſion on the minds of men; and impoſtors, if they found it neceſſary to correct an erroneous interpretation of any ſuppoſed prediction uttered by themſelves, would naturally point out its exact accommodation to the event, which alone they had intended to mark out by it, and would be doubly cautious of expoſing themſelves to new difficulties, by uttering new predictions;— whereas St. Paul, addreſſing the [x] Theſſalonians, and warning them, " not to be troubled by word or by

[x] 2 Theſſ. the entire 2d chap.

" letter

" letter as from us, that the day of Chriſt is at hand," adds a declaration, that that day ſhould not come till after ſome ſignal apoſtacy, and the revealing of ſome mighty and unrighteous power, which he terms " *the man of ſin*," the character and progreſs of which, he reminds them he had already in converſation deſcribed to them, and now therefore only briefly touches on.

[y] Thus alſo St. Peter, while he aſſerts the certainty of their Lord's coming to judge the world, yet declares it ſhould be ſo long deferred, that immoral and impious men ſhould ſcoff at the delay. How remote from enthuſiaſm, or from deceit, are ſuch predictions in both the apoſtles? May we not reaſon with a late [z] judicious writer, that a fanatic would have been ſlow to entertain in his own mind, or to diſcloſe to his hearers and correſpondents, ſuch diſcouraging ideas; and that a hypocrite would not have betrayed theſe diſcrediting particulars of his own plan, by foretelling the depravity of thoſe who ſhould hereafter embrace it.

Finally, it ſeems probable, for the ſame reaſon, that if impoſtors had fabricated ſuch a prediction after the event, in order to gain credit to their Lord,

[y] 2 Peter, the entire 3d chap.

[z] Dr. Mainwaring, profeſſor of divinity in Cambridge, in his ſermon preached before the univerſity, the 3d of May, 1795, p. 2.

they

they would have confined themſelves to that event, as the only one which it was conſiſtent with their purpoſe to allude to.—Now, this is not the caſe;—this prophecy does not confine itſelf to the immediate event of the deſtruction of Jeruſalem, but predicts a *continuation* of its deſolate and ruinous ſtate. "Jeruſalem ſhall be trodden down of the Gentiles, "till the times of the Gentiles ſhall be fulfilled."—Now, to this hour Jeruſalem is trodden of the Gentiles, and to this hour the event, denoted by the *times of the Gentiles being fulfilled*, in whatever ſenſe we interpret theſe words, has not taken place. Is the prediction of this coincidence of two continued and independent circumſtances, in the courſe of human affairs, for above one thouſand ſeven hundred years, to be accounted for, either by enthuſiaſm or impoſture.

But I muſt forbear enlarging on ſuch prophecies of the new teſtament, as were not fully accompliſhed during the lives of thoſe to whom it was firſt addreſſed; as theſe could have formed no part of the evidence on which the firſt converts received the goſpel, which only I am now obliged to conſider. Undoubtedly no argument more deciſively proves the genuine inſpiration, and divine authority, of the apoſtolic writings, than the predictions found in them, of the ſucceſſive fortunes of Chriſtianity, from its firſt promulgation to the preſent hour; predictions which have been conſtantly and gradually accompliſhed

pliſhed on the earth, and are at this moment advancing to a ſtill more perfect and ſignal completion.

But this important argument, which every day receives accumulated evidence, need not be introduced here, it has been ably and fully treated of by [a] many writers, whoſe works I would earneſtly recommend to every man who wiſhes to confirm his faith, and impreſs upon his heart a deep ſenſe of the divine origin and ſtupendous importance of the Chriſtian ſcheme. I ſhall conclude my remarks on this part of

[a] Amongſt the moſt uſeful of theſe works are the following: Lardner on the fulfilment of our Saviour's predictions concerning the Jews—Jewiſh and Heathen teſtimonies, vol. 1. ch. iii.—Seventh vol. of Dr. Keppis's edition—Ditto, in his three ſermons on the ſtate of the Jews, vol. 10, p. 63—Newton's diſſertations on the prophecies—Biſhops Hurd, Halifax and Bagot, in their ſermons preached at Warburton's lecture—Worthington's ſermons, preached at Boyle's lecture, 1766—Sharpe's ſecond argument in defence of Chriſtiany—Kidder's demonſtration of the Meſſiah—The works of Joſeph Mede, and Henry More—The approved commentators on the New Teſtament, eſpecially on the Revelations—Whiſton's ſcripture prophecies—* Dr. Macknight's truth of the goſpel hiſtory, p. 199—Miller's hiſtory of the propagation of Chriſtianity—*Benſon's eſſay on the man of ſin, in his paraphraſe on the Epiſtles, p. 268—And to mention no more, the Rev. E. W. Whitaker, in his general and connected view of the prophecies relating to the times of the Gentiles, Egham, 1795, ſold by Rivington, in London, 1 vol. 12mo. a work which muſt intereſt the generality of readers, as the author adduces the teſtimony of the celebrated Mr. Gibbon, to the facts which, as he alledges, prove the accompliſhment of the ſcripture prophecies.

N. B. The tracts marked * are re-printed in the 5th vol. of Biſhop Watſon's excellent collection.

the

the ſubject, by obſerving, that as the prophecies contained in the apoſtolic writings, which by their ſpeedy accompliſhment may have contributed to conciliate or to confirm the faith of the firſt converts, are evidently ſuch as enthuſiaſm did not dictate; ſo alſo theſe writings rarely contain any predictions of events immediately approaching, except thoſe delivered by our Lord, which we have now conſidered; and the few they do contain are not aſcribed to the apoſtles or evangeliſts themſelves.

In the Acts of the apoſtles I have obſerved only the following predictions. One, of the [b] famine which took place in the days of Claudius Cæſar, and which was related, not merely to ſhew the inſpiration of the prophet, but becauſe it was connected with the ſubject of the hiſtory; as in conſequence of it a contribution was raiſed in the different churches for the Chriſtians in Judea—a fact to which frequent alluſions are made, both in the Acts and Epiſtles.—Another was pronounced, [c] when St. Paul was going up to Jeruſalem, declaring, that the Jews there would bind him, and deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles; which ſeems alſo to have been mentioned, not ſo much for its own ſake, as to introduce the affecting incidents connected with it. When the Chriſtians, at Cæſarea, beſought the apoſtle, that he would not go up to Jeruſalem; and he anſwered,

[b] Acts xi. 30. [c] Ib. xxi. 10.

with

with the firmneſs of a martyr, and the tenderneſs of a parent, "[d] what mean you to weep and to break "mine heart, for I am ready, not to be bound only, "but to die at Jeruſalem, for the name of the Lord "Jeſus." Both theſe predictions are aſcribed to the ſame perſon, *Agabus*, who does not ſeem to have been diſtinguiſhed on any other account in the Chriſtian church.

St. Paul himſelf is deſcribed in one place, when in danger from a violent tempeſt[e], to have received an aſſurance, that he, and all his companions in the voyage, ſhould eſcape; and in another, he exhorts the Theſſalonians, not to be moved with his afflictions, for "[f] *yourſelves, ſays the apoſtle, know that we are* "*appointed thereunto; for verily, when we were with* "*you we told you before, that we ſhould ſuffer tribula-*"*tion, even as it came to paſs, and ye know.*" But though aſſured that he was appointed to ſuſtain ſuffering in general, yet he confeſſes himſelf ignorant of the particular mode of ſuffering which awaited him; for before he heard the prophecy of Agabus, as to the particular event of his journey to Jeruſalem, he declares to the church at Epheſus—"[g] Behold I

[d] Acts xxi 13. [e] Ib. 27. 10. [f] 1 Theſ. iii. 3.

[g] Acts xx. 17.—The entire addreſs is well worth peruſal; conſcious truth and honeſty, ſincere piety, and prudent, but earneſt zeal, breath forth ſo forcibly in every part of it, as can ſcarcely fail of penetrating the heart, and convincing the underſtanding of every reader.

"go

" go bound in the Spirit unto Jeruſalem, *not knowing*
" the things which ſhall befal me there, ſave that
" the Holy Ghoſt witneſſeth in every city, ſaying,
" that bonds and afflictions abide me; and now be-
" hold, I know that ye all among whom I have gone
" preaching the kingdom of God, ſhall ſee my face
" no more."—Now, I appeal to every candid mind, whether the tenor of this narration, and of theſe ſentiments, is not very different from what we ſhould naturally expect either from deceivers or fanatics? Would men who fabricated a hiſtory to gain the reputation of a prophetic character for themſelves or others, aſcribe the moſt ſtriking and important predictions, not to themſelves, or to thoſe whoſe characters they wiſhed to exalt, but to ſome other obſcure individual, who is repreſented as expreſsly revealing what they before had been ignorant of?—Such confeſſions as theſe never proceed from impoſtors.—On the other hand, would wild enthuſiaſts, wrapt in the vain dreams of a perpetually ſuperintending inſpiration, have thus ſtrictly limited their pretenſions to prophetic light, to a few events of their lives, out of a great multitude, confeſſing themſelves in others totally dark and ignorant?—would they have been able to ſay to the overpowering torrent of fanatic deluſion—ſo far ſhall you go, but no further? Aſſuredly not.—Let me add, that when the apoſtles deliver predictions of remote events affecting the intereſts of the church in diſtant ages, while they confeſs themſelves ignorant of many,

which

which were immediately intereſting to themſelves; this ſeems exactly conformable to what we ſhould expect from the inſpiration of that wiſdom which deſcended from above, not to gratify their private curioſity, or to promote their perſonal advantage, but to exhibit them as the lights of the world, in whom the ſpirit of prophecy ſhould bear teſtimony to Jeſus —a teſtimony, whoſe clearneſs ſhould increaſe with the progreſs of time, and whoſe full ſplendor ſhould be reſerved, to illuminate the remoteſt periods of futurity.

SECTION IV.

The mode in which the apoſtles propoſed the evidence of Chriſtianity was free from enthuſiaſm.

IF from the nature of the evidence offered by the apoſtles, we turn our attention to the mode in which it was propoſed, we ſhall be ſtill more clearly convinced of the truth and ſoberneſs with which their inſtructions were enforced. It has indeed been ſometimes [h] alledged, in order to ſhew that the acceptance of Chriſtianity was not founded on rational conviction, that its firſt teachers did not give their

[h] Vid. Chriſtianity not founded on argument, p. 39, with Doddridge's reply, letter ii. p. 10. and Dr. Randolph's Chriſtian faith a rational aſſent, p. 180 to 195.

hearers

hearers *ſufficient time* to examine the proofs which they advanced;—but this is directly contradicted by the hiſtory of the apoſtles. In many inſtances, doubtleſs, the direct exhibition of clear and uncontrouled miracles to the ſenſes of men, joined with the immediate interference of the Spirit of God, produced ſuch full and inſtantaneous conviction, as rendered all abſtract reaſoning ſuperfluous and impertinent; hence three thouſand of thoſe who witneſſed the miraculous effuſion of the Holy Ghoſt at the feaſt of Pentecoſt, were converted at once; and the ſubſequent miracles of the apoſtles encreaſed the number ſpeedily to five thouſand. But the general progreſs of the goſpel, though rapid enough to evince the interpoſition of divine power, was yet ſufficiently deliberate and gradual, to afford full room for the exerciſe of calm reaſon and ſober enquiry, in thoſe by whom it was embraced. At Antioch, Paul and Barnabas, for "a [i] *whole year*, aſſembled themſelves with the church, and taught much people;" from thence they were delegated, after deliberate prayer and faſting, to preach the goſpel to the ſurrounding region; and when they had executed their commiſſion, during an abſence of conſiderable length, they returned to Antioch, and [k] abode there a *long time* with the diſciples. [l] At Corinth, though St. Paul had the moſt extenſive province of any of the apoſtles, yet he continued a *year and ſix months*

[i] Acts xi. 26. [k] Ib. xiv. 28. [l] Ib. xviii. 4 and 11.

teaching

teaching the word of God, and "reaſoned publicly in the ſynagogue every ſabbath, perſuading the Jews and Greeks."

To the inhabitants of Epheſus he appeals, [m] that he had not ceaſed to warn them night and day "for the ſpace of *three years*."—"At [n] Rome "Paul dwelt *two years* in his own hired houſe, and "received all that came unto him, preaching the "kingdom of God, and teaching thoſe things which "concern the Lord Jeſus Chriſt."—Beſides this, the apoſtles [o] frequently in their circuits returned again to the ſame places, and when they could not conveniently go themſelves, they ſent other teachers to plant the goſpel, or eſtabliſh it where planted; and in every city where they came, they ordained elders capable of building on the foundation they had laid, and teaching all who deſired to receive inſtruction. And as both our Lord and his apoſtles afforded ſufficient time for enquiry, they alſo adduced the evidence, which they ſupplied for the truth of Chriſtianity, in that [p] *manner* which was moſt natural and ſimple,

[m] Acts xx. 31. [n] Ib. xxviii. the end.

[o] Vid. Acts xiv. 21 to 25. Ib. xv. 41.

[p] For theſe obſervations on the *manner* in which our Saviour and his apoſtles propoſed the evidences of Chriſtianity, and its propriety, I am indebted to Dr. Alexander Gerard, profeſſor of divinity in the college of Aberdeen, who in his volume of diſſertations on ſubjects relating to the genius and evidence of Chriſtianity, publiſhed in London and Edinburgh, 1766, has a copious and elaborate diſſertation on this ſubject.

and

and beſt calculated to prove its truth and reality; they propoſed the evidence of their miſſion in two very different ſituations, to thoſe who had not yet expreſſed any prejudice againſt the goſpel, or againſt the proofs of its divinity, and alſo to thoſe who were actuated by ſtrong prejudices, engaged in active oppoſition, and who raiſed the moſt forcible objections they could diſcover: in theſe oppoſite ſituations they propoſed the evidences of the goſpel, in *different manners*, each of which was exactly proper in the circumſtances under which it was employed, and each proves the truth and ſoberneſs which attended the promulgation of Chriſtianity.

In addreſſing thoſe who *did not raiſe objections* againſt the evidences, it was their uniform method to ſatisfy themſelves with *barely exhibiting theſe evidences*; they laboured not to prove by argumentation, that they were ſufficient; they were not at pains either to prevent or remove every objection which might be ſtarted; they explained not minutely the particular manner in which each evidence ſupported their miſſion.

Thus our Saviour delivered the moſt pure and excellent doctrines; but, except when driven to it by oppoſition, he did not *urge* their excellence as a proof of their divinity, he left his hearers to *feel* the excellence of his religion, and conclude for themſelves, that it was of divine original; it was not by means of

his encomiums, but by their own perceptions, that great numbers diſcovered the features of divinity in his diſcourſes.

He exhibited the proof of his miſſion, ariſing from miracles, with equal ſimplicity; thoſe miracles were of the moſt various and ſtupendous kinds; having performed them, he entered into no laboured detail of the circumſtances which ſhewed their reality, he left them to ſpeak for themſelves, and to ſupport both their reality and their force by their internal characters of divine power. Thus alſo, he did not, at the time of working every particular miracle, alledge it as a proof of the truth of his doctrines, he laid claim to a divine miſſion, and conſtanttly delivered his doctrines as from God; but a general declaration of the intention of his miracles, with an appeal to them on ſome particular occaſions, was ſufficient for rendering them vouchers of his miſſion, and with this he was content.

Our Lord directed his diſciples to uſe the very ſame method. When he ſent forth the twelve, his inſtructions were—"[q] preach, ſaying, the kingdom of "heaven is at hand; heal the ſick, cleanſe the "lepers, raiſe the dead, caſt out devils—freely ye "have received, freely give."—To the ſeventy diſciples he alſo gave ſimilar inſtructions; inſtead of teach-

[q] Matt. x. 8.

ing

ing them arguments, he commanded them to work miracles; this was the evidence he directed them to produce; and during the whole courſe of their miniſtry, the apoſtles were contented with ſimply exhibiting the evidences of Chriſtianity whenever ſome very immediate and particular oppoſition did not require their doing otherwiſe;—they alledge the miracles of their Lord—they inſiſt particularly on his reſurrection—they relate occaſionally the circumſtances which attended theſe facts, and which put their reality beyond doubt; but they do not argue on thoſe circumſtances, they ſpeak of them as what they knew to be true, and what all ſincere enquirers would certainly find to be true, and they ſeem to reckon this *enough;* they often appeal to the prophecies of the Old Teſtament, and barely appealed to them without any laboured application; they alſo themſelves worked many miracles, they healed diſeaſes, caſt out devils, raiſed the dead, exerciſed various gifts of the Spirit; they gave their miracles a connection with the goſpel, by working them with a profeſſed deſign to confirm the doctrine which they preached, and by declaring, as often as it was neceſſary, that they wrought them in the name of Jeſus Chriſt; but they do this with the greateſt ſimplicity, without any laboured arguments to ſupport, or any ſtrong aſſertions of the importance of theſe miracles.

Such was the original manner in which the evidences of the goſpel were propoſed to the impartial

and unprejudiced obſerver; and it was certainly a mode which ſoberneſs only could dictate, and truth only render effectual. Our Saviour and his apoſtles wrought their miracles in ſuch circumſtances, as rendered men attentive to them, and forced them to perceive their reality by their own ſenſes; and this was exactly the mode which the ſoundeſt reaſon would preſcribe; without the evidence of ſenſe the moſt peremptory aſſertion that a miracle was wrought, will not ſatisfy thoſe who muſt have ſeen it if it had been wrought; and if it was certainly perceived by the ſenſes, all aſſertions of its reality were ſuperfluous.

The topics of doubt and difficulty, which occur to us in reaſoning on the miracles now, could not ſubſiſt at the time they were performed. We are under the neceſſity of proving they were, in fact, performed by our Saviour and his apoſtles; but the ſpectators *ſaw* this. We are prone to ſuſpect that we may be ignorant of ſome circumſtances of theſe facts neceſſary for determining their real nature; but to thoſe who were eye-witneſſes of all theſe circumſtances, if they rendered them plainly miraculous, this muſt be perceived by their ſenſes—if they left the miracle equivocal, ſcarce any arguments would prove they did not, at leaſt the neceſſity of uſing arguments would indicate ſtrongly, that the miracles were of an equivocal kind.

Hence

Hence we account for circumſtances which have been adduced to prove that Chriſtianity was not founded on rational argument, but on blind enthuſiaſm; even the *immediate aſſent* which was demanded, without, as it is ſaid, "[r] allowing time for "doubt or deliberation," and the "*approbation* with "which a ready acquieſcence in the goſpel was re-"ceived," as well as the *ſeverity* with which its "rejection, was ſometimes menaced."—The evidence offered was not intricate reaſoning in proof of each doctrine ſeparately, which would have required long examination; miracles were wrought, and led men to conclude at once the divine miſſion of thoſe who wrought them, and conſequently the truth of all the doctrines which they delivered in the name of God; if ſuch evidence was fit to work immediate conviction, it was really commendable to attend to it without prejudice, and yield to it readily, ſince its force might be perceived in an inſtant. Inattention or rejection could ſcarcely ariſe from any thing but an impious indifference to the will of God, or ſome perverſion of underſtanding, the effect of a depraved and vicious heart.—But this plain and artleſs mode of propoſing the proofs of Chriſtianity, would have had no ſucceſs if their evidence had not been *ſolid*.—Slender evidence will not ſucceed, except it is ſet off by ſpecious reaſonings, except ſome method is uſed for giving the appearance of evidence

[r] Vid. Chriſtianity not founded on argument, p. 35 to 39.

where

where there is none, or of greater than there really is, by artificially diverting the attention of the mind from the want or the defects of the proofs; but in the propoſal of the goſpel nothing of this kind took place, its proofs were preſented naked and unadorned;—now, is it poſſible this method could have ſucceeded, if there had been no real evidence?—muſt not the defect have been quickly perceived when no means were employed to conceal it?—Never was a falſehood ſucceſsfully inculcated by a bare exhibition of pretended evidence, without any art or pains employed for concealing the defect, and impoſing on the underſtanding. On the contrary, ſuppoſing the reality of the proofs adduced, this *ſimple* method of propoſing them was not only *ſufficient* to induce men to believe the goſpel, it was alſo the *fitteſt* for this purpoſe; the more ſimply evidence can be in any caſe propoſed, conſiſtently with clearneſs, the more readily it will produce conviction; ſubtle reaſonings, if they are not abſolutely neceſſary, only burden the proof and perplex the underſtanding. The *ſimple manner* of propoſing the evidence of Chriſtianity was the beſt adapted to the generality of mankind, and therefore ſpeaks itſelf, not obſcurely, to be the offspring of that wiſdom which fixed the human conſtitution.

In fine, this ſimplicity of manner was equally inconſiſtent with the artifice of impoſtors, who labour to ſet off the ſlight evidence, which only they can produce,

produce, with a parade of argument, and with the dogmatical violence of enthuſiaſts, who aſſert poſitively, and repeatedly, the certainty of their divine authority, but produce not any proofs to eſtabliſh it; —directly the reverſe of this was the manner in which the evidence of Chriſtianity was propoſed, exhibiting direct proofs and facts, but exhibiting them with an artleſs ſimplicity and calm dignity, well ſuited to conſcious truth and genuine inſpiration.

Thus it appears, that the original manner of propoſing the evidences of Chriſtianity, adopted by our Lord, and his apoſtles, to thoſe who were candid and unprejudiced, was plain and artleſs, but at the ſame time moſt clear and convincing, moſt calm and dignified; but amongſt thoſe who were prejudiced and hoſtile, who laboured to raiſe objections, and to find ſome pretexts for rejecting the proofs thus plainly ſubmitted to them, they proceeded in a manner different indeed, but equally natural, rational, and convincing; they did not on ſuch occaſions proudly attempt to ſilence enquiry, or refuſe to anſwer it; they did not content themſelves with barely repeating poſitive aſſertions of their divine miſſion, and denouncing condemnation to all who preſumed to doubt of it:—no,—as far as the peculiar circumſtances of the caſe would admit, they obviated the objections that were raiſed; they removed the prejudices which prevented the full force of the

evidence

evidence offered from being ſeen or acknowledged; they vindicated their characters from calumny; they pointed out the erroneous interpretations of the prophets, which led the Jews to form wrong expectations of the Meſſiah; they corrected their perverſions of morality, which rendered them unfavourable to the purity of the goſpel; they addreſſed to the different claſſes of their hearers ſuch arguments as ſeemed beſt ſuited to their previous information, and beſt calculated to win their aſſent.—Thus they confirmed and illuſtrated the evidence which had been originally propoſed; they removed many objections; they added many new circumſtances; the ſimplicity of the manner in which, in the firſt inſtance, they ſubmitted to men's obſervation the proofs of Chriſtianity, ſhewed they were fully aſſured of their certainty; while the readineſs with which they ſubmitted theſe proofs to ſtrict ſcrutiny, and entered into argumentation in defence of them, as far as was neceſſary, afforded a ſtill further proof of their ſincerity and zeal; in both they ſhewed ſoundneſs of underſtanding and ſobriety of mind, utterly inconſiſtent with the weakneſs and incoherence of fanaticiſm, as well as the cunning and caution of impoſture.

That this, as it may be termed, *argumentative manner*, was frequently adopted by our Saviour, and his apoſtles, we have even in the courſe of this [s] work

[s] Vid. particularly, chap. i. ſect. 3d and 4th; and this chapter, ſect. 1ſt and 2d.

ſeen

ſeen ſo many inſtances as may render any minute detail of them here unneceſſary. We have ſeen that our Saviour ſubmitted his miracles fearleſsly to the ſcrutiny of his enemies, and performed them in ſuch a manner as excited the attention of theſe enemies: we have ſeen that the ſtrongeſt appeals to his works, as clear proofs of his divine miſſion, and his moſt direct application of the prophecies to himſelf, were made in conſequence of the oppoſition of the Phariſees, and of the meſſage from the Baptiſt; we have accounted for his ſometimes concealing his miracles, and refuſing a ſign to the Phariſees, which at firſt ſeem moſt objectionable in this view; we have ſhewn that the apoſtles addreſſed to the Jews and the Heathens thoſe arguments, on whoſe validity they could beſt decide—and it is plain, that they frequently exhorted men to exerciſe their reaſon, in obſerving the nature and tendency of the doctrines taught, and thence judging of their divine original, and in ſearching the ſcriptures for themſelves.—Thus the Bereans are repreſented as more noble than the inhabitants of Theſſalonica, becauſe they not only received the word with readineſs, "but *ſearched the ſcriptures daily*, "*whether theſe things were ſo.*"

The diſcourſes, and much more the epiſtles, which they addreſſed to their converts, abound with appeals to recent facts, to acknowledged prophecies, with hiſtorical deductions, and cloſe inferences, anſwers to objections, and ſolutions of difficulties, which

ſenſeleſs

ſenſeleſs fanatics would have wanted both inclination and capacity to ſupply.

But the *writings* of the apoſtles, conſidered as criterions of their freedom from fanaticiſm, will form the object of further diſcuſſion; for the preſent it is ſufficient to obſerve, that had their ſucceſs depended on the impulſe of enthuſiaſm—were men to have been converted by a ſilent whiſper, or an irreſiſtible light from heaven, that flaſhed conviction on their ſouls, it ſhould ſeem that miracles and prophecies would have been uſeleſs, arguments impertinent, and inſtructions ſuperfluous. Thus every page of the New Teſtament appears to confute thoſe raſh and ſuperficial declaimers, who attribute to wild fanaticiſm the origin and ſucceſs of a ſcheme, which every where lays its foundation on plain facts, and vindicates its truth by ſober reaſoning.

Here then I might with ſafety reſt the deciſion of this queſtion, and contend that enthuſiaſm could not have been the ſource of the zeal with which the apoſtles maintained the reſurrection, and divine authority of their crucified Lord; or of the ſucceſs which they obtained in the promulgation of the goſpel; becauſe the proofs of miraculous power on which their own conviction was founded, as well as thoſe by which they convinced their converts, were ſuch as excluded the poſſibility of miſtake or deluſion—plain facts, ſubmitted to the deliberate examination

examination of the ſenſes—facts various, repeated, permanent, and decidedly ſupernatural and divine.—And the arguments derived from the prophecies which our Saviour delivered or fulfilled, were rational, clear and ſatisfactory—while in the apoſtles we diſcover the ſtrongeſt marks of ſobriety of mind, from their advancing no claim to a prophetic character, further than was ſtrictly ſupported by truth, and their delivering only ſuch predictions, as it was moſt likely ſhould have been dictated by divine inſpiration; predictions, not applying to immediate or private circumſtances, but to events of moſt ſignal importance and of remote accompliſhment.

But though theſe are the great principles on which we ſhould fix our attention, it may yet be ſatisfactory to purſue our enquiry ſomewhat further, and vindicate the apoſtles and evangeliſts from every ſuſpicion, that they did at all diſtort the facts they relate, or corrupt the doctrines they deliver with any mixture of fanatic extravagance, by ſhewing that this ſobriety of mind appears ſo ſtrongly predominant in the uniform tenor of their *conduct*, and of their *writings*, that we muſt confeſs them wholly free from thoſe weakneſſes that give riſe to enthuſiaſm, and all the follies and extravagancies which attend and expoſe its influence.

CHAP.

CHAPTER III.

The CONDUCT *of the apoſtles, ſhewn to be inconſiſtent with the ſuppoſition of their having been enthuſiaſts.*

SECTION I.

The general conduct of the apoſtles in their private capacity, inconſiſtent with enthuſiaſm.

IN the firſt chapter we examined the ſtrength of that evidence, by which the apoſtles had been themſelves aſſured of their divine miſſion; and in the ſecond, the clearneſs of the proofs which they adduced to convince their proſelytes; and it has, I truſt, appeared, that theſe firſt teachers of our holy faith cannot juſtly be charged, either with that raſh credulity, which is itſelf the eaſy dupe of deluſion, or that preſumptuous dogmatiſm, which impoſes its deluſions on others, both which ſeem to be primary and eſſential characters of genuine fanaticiſm. Let us in the next place compare the *conduct* of the apoſtles

apoſtles with that which enthuſiaſm would naturally produce.

Now, we ever find that, ſo far as this prevails, reaſon and judgment are proportionably laid aſide; the mode in which this weakneſs diſplays itſelf, will neceſſarily vary with the peculiar temper and character of him who labours under it; but in every temper and character extravagance and folly will appear. Is the enthuſiaſt naturally gloomy and deſpondent? we ſhall find him overpowered by religious melancholy and abſtraction, devoted to exceſſive mortification and fantaſtic penances. Is he ſanguine and violent? we ſhall ſee him ruſh forward in the hot purſuit, to which he conceives himſelf driven by a divine impulſe, without any regard to reaſon or diſcretion, perpetually trampling on the reſtraints of order and decency—not only ready to ſuſtain, but impatient to ſearch out and court perſecution, danger and death. In both caſes he is alienated from and unfitted for the relations and offices of common life; ſuch men will not labour, it is unworthy their ſanctity; they will deſpiſe all human diſtinctions as beneath their notice: thus, though the end purſued may be religious and praiſe-worthy, the means employed to attain it will be found, in ſome reſpect or other, extravagant and abſurd. Now the conduct of the apoſtles, as it is *incidentally* diſcloſed to us by the artleſs hiſtorian, who has deſcribed the firſt eſtabliſh-

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ment of Chriſtianity, appears entirely free from theſe various weakneſſes.

We diſcover in their mode of life no melancholy, no abſtraction from ſociety, no averſion to labour; in the interval between the reſurrection of their Lord and the commencement of their own public miniſtry, we find they had returned to the calm and humble purſuit of that laborious induſtry which had originally formed their ſole occupation. They were employed in [t] *fiſhing* on the lake Tiberias, when our Lord appeared to them, and by the miraculous ſucceſs, which at his word they obtained, convinced them he ſtill retained the ſame divine power which they had ſeen exerciſed on a ſimilar occaſion in the commencement of his miniſtry. Such a ſituation and employment were as remote from enthuſiaſm as can be imagined.

They were commanded by their Lord to wait at Jeruſalem, before they publiſhed his [u] reſurrection, "till they ſhould receive power from on high," and they waited patiently for forty days; enthuſiaſm is violent and ſudden—their faith was rational, and therefore their conduct deliberate. But even after they received this promiſed power, and in conſequence of the ſacred commiſſion dedicated their whole lives to preaching the goſpel of Chriſt, they

[t] John xxi.

[u] Luke xxiv. 49.

yet

yet were not [x] elevated above the common relations; they did not undervalue the common duties of life.—The very reverſe—they frequently recalled men to obſerve, but never encouraged them to neglect ſuch duties, to abandon buſineſs or induſtry, and to retire to the cave or the deſart, for the purpoſe of indulging indolence or ſpiritual pride beneath the maſk of devotion, and thus becoming a burthen to others for their ſupport, without contributing any thing to the general good.

We obſerve in their conduct no unneceſſary auſterities, no ſelf-inflicted ſufferings, no habitual melancholy, not even in St. Paul, whoſe conduct is more particularly detailed, and whoſe remorſe for having perſecuted the church of Chriſt, had made the deepeſt impreſſion on his ſoul; even he did not attempt to atone for his offence by ſolitude and penance, but by indefatigable activity in the ſervice of that Chriſt whom he had perſecuted:—this was ſincerity, not enthuſiaſm.

[x] The following paſſages ſhew that the apoſtles both in their practice and precepts attended to the natural relations of life.—"Have we not power, ſays St. Paul, 1 Cor. ix. 5. to lead "about a ſiſter, a wife, as well as other apoſtles, and as the "brethren of the Lord and Cephas;"—and 1 Tim. iii. 2 and 4. "A biſhop then muſt be blameleſs, the huſband of one wife, "vigilant, ſober, of good behaviour, given to hoſpitality, apt to "teach—one that ruleth well his own houſe, having his chil-"dren in ſubjection with all gravity; for if a man know not "how to rule his own houſe, how ſhall he take care of the "church of God."

Addreſſing

Addreſſing himſelf to the Theſſalonians he has this remarkable appeal.—" [y] For yourſelves know " how ye ought to follow us; for we behaved not " ourſelves diſorderly among you, neither did we eat " any man's bread for nought, but wrought with " labour and travel, night and day, that we might " not be chargeable to any of you; not becauſe " we have not power, but to make ourſelves " an example to you to follow us. For even " when we were with you, this we commanded you, " that if any would not work, neither ſhould he " eat; for we hear that there are ſome which walk " among you diſorderly, working not at all, but are " buſy-bodies: now them that are ſuch we com- " mand, and exhort by our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, " that with quietneſs they work, and eat their own " bread." How totally remote this from the ſelf-intereſt of impoſture, or the wildneſs of enthuſiaſm.

What St. Paul aſſerts of himſelf and his immediate companions (Silvanus and Timotheus) he in another place declares of all the apoſtles. Addreſſing the Corinthians, he tells them—" I think God has ſet " forth us the apoſtles laſt, as it were appointed " unto death [z]—even unto this preſent hour we " both hunger and thirſt, and are naked, and are " buffeted, having no certain dwelling-place, and

[y] 2 Theſ. iii. 7—12.

[z] 1 Cor. iv. 9—12.

" *labour*

" *labour, working with our own hands.*"—Impoſtors would not adhere to a religion attended with ſuch difficulties; enthuſiaſts would not endeavour to exhibit an example of active, humble induſtry, even in the midſt of the moſt ſevere perſecutions, and moſt important religious avocations. I conclude, that the conduct, as well as the words of the apoſtles, beſpeak truth and ſoberneſs.

SECTION II.

The conduct of the apoſtles in the regulation of the church, proves them to have been exempt from enthuſiaſm.

THE ſame ſobriety of mind which diſplayed itſelf in the perſonal conduct of the apoſtles, was equally conſpicuous in the regulation of the Chriſtian church, over which they preſided. In this view I would call the attention of my reader to a tranſaction which took place before they entered on their public miniſtry, and which I notice, becauſe it ſeems equally inconſiſtent with impoſture and enthuſiaſm.—Peter collects the diſciples, in number one hundred and twenty, and propoſes to ſupply the place of the fallen

Judas. Now was this a meaſure which *impoſtors* would adopt? If a [a] monopoly of power or influence was deſigned, would the men who poſſeſſed this monopoly propoſe or conſent, without any apparent neceſſity, to admit an obſcure individual to the ſame rank, amongſt the new converts, which they themſelves enjoyed?—no, certainly. But conſider the qualifications required in this ſubſtitute, and judge whether they are ſuch as *enthuſiaſts* would naturally have ſelected. Did they look for that individual amongſt the converts moſt diſtinguiſhed for warm zeal, ſpiritual extacies, or extravagant auſterity?—Far otherwiſe, no ſuch ideas ſeem to have once entered into the imagination of the propoſer. He looked for thoſe qualities which would give the new apoſtle's teſtimony the greateſt weight in the judgment of ſober reaſon, but which enthuſiaſm would have neglected or deſpiſed; he ſought for one who muſt have had full opportunity of examining all the facts which it was neceſſary he ſhould atteſt: [b] "Of theſe "men, ſays St. Peter, which have companied with "us all the time that the Lord Jeſus went in and "out among us, beginning from the baptiſm of John "until that ſame day that he was taken up from us, "muſt one be ordained to be a witneſs with us of "his reſurrection."

[a] Vid. Herman Piſtorius's Notes to Hartley, vol. iii. p. 610, London 1791, for this part of this remark.

[b] Acts i. 21.

The

The manner of the election, while it diſplays a deep and heartfelt piety, with a firm confidence, that the religion they taught was under the immediate protection of that divine Power which had already borne witneſs to it by the moſt ſtupendous miracles; yet was it as ſober and regular as it was pious and ſincere. They appointed two perſons, and they prayed and ſaid, [c] "Thou Lord, who knoweſt the "hearts of all men, ſhew whether of theſe two thou "haſt choſen, that he may take part of this miniſtry "and apoſtleſhip from which Judas by tranſgreſſion "fell, that he might go to his own place; and they "gave forth their lots, and he on whom the lot "fell was numbered with the eleven apoſtles."—The calm and decorous manner in which the apoſtate Judas is here mentioned, ſeems as inconſiſtent with the violence of enthuſiaſm, as the qualification ſought for in his ſubſtitute, and the mode of the ſelection. All theſe circumſtances beſpeak truth and piety; all are inconſiſtent with fraud or fanaticiſm.

Another tranſaction of ſomewhat a ſimilar nature, ſeems equally to prove that the apoſtles were devoid of every intereſted view which impoſtors might entertain, and directed by prudence and diſcretion in the conduct of their religious concerns, which enthuſiaſts ſcarcely ever obſerve.

[c] Acts i. 24.

The firſt converts felt their minds impreſſed by the miracles they beheld with ſo deep a ſenſe of the importance of religion, above every temporal concern, that [d] "as many as were poſſeſſors of lands or houſes "ſold them, and brought the prices of the things "that were ſold, and laid them down at the apoſtles' "feet, and diſtribution was made to every man (in "the Chriſtian ſociety) according as he had need." Now here was an occaſion which *intereſted men* would have improved to their own advantage, by urging the continuance of this community of goods as a *duty*, and cautiouſly reſerving to themſelves the management of the fund it ſupplied, as the moſt valuable appendage of their miniſtry; on the other hand, *enthuſiaſts* would have probably encouraged this neglect of all temporal concerns with avidity, as ſuited to the fervor of religious zeal, which in their eyes would form the higheſt merit. Not ſo the apoſtles—of this community of goods they took no advantage; they diſtributed to each as they had need; they reſerved to themſelves, if any thing, certainly no more than ſupplied the preſent neceſſaries of life, as appears from their ſubſequent and continued poverty; and even preſent neceſſaries they frequently procured by their own labour. And what is equally ſtriking, the whole New Teſtament does not contain a ſingle paſſage, repreſenting this community of goods as a *duty* which Chriſtianity enjoins:—it was an il-

[d] Acts iv. 34, 35.

luſtrious

luſtrious act of liberality, ſuited to the circumſtances exiſting at that particular place and period, but no where recommended for general adoption. St. Paul confirms the dictates of reaſon on this ſubject, by the authority of revelation, when he declares that none have a right to be ſupported by others, except ſuch as are incapable of providing for themſelves, and deſtitute of thoſe relatives from whom nature dictates they ſhould obtain relief. In deſcribing the rules by which the diſtribution of Chriſtian beneficence ſhould be regulated, he directs [e] "if any widow have chil-"dren or nephews, let them learn firſt to *ſhew piety* "at home, and to requite *their parents*, for this is "good and acceptable before God; but if any provide "not for his own, and eſpecially for thoſe of his "own houſe, he hath denied the faith, and is worſe "than an infidel." How remote is this from the language of fanaticiſm? However, on this ſubject it is neceſſary farther to obſerve, that the ſingular and unparalleled liberality of the firſt Chriſtians, undoubtedly placed the apoſtles in a trying and ſuſpicious ſituation; and the manner in which they acted, indicates prudence and diſcretion, as ſtrongly as it diſplays piety and zeal [f].

"When the number of the diſciples was multiplied, "(ſays the hiſtorian) there aroſe a murmuring of the "Grecians againſt the Hebrews, becauſe their wi-

[e] 1 Timothy v. 4th and 8th verſes. [f] Acts vi. 1.

"dows

" dows were neglected in the daily miniſtration. " Then the twelve called the multitude of the diſ- " ciples unto them, and ſaid, it is not reaſon that " we ſhould leave the word of God and ſerve tables " *(to preſide over this diſtribution)*—wherefore, bre- " thren, look ye out among you ſeven men of honeſt " report, full of the Holy Ghoſt and of wiſdom, whom " we may appoint over this buſineſs; but we will " give ourſelves continually to prayer, and to the " miniſtry of the word."

This total abdication of all interference with the pecuniary concerns of the ſociety, and even with the ſelection of the perſons appointed to conduct them, was undoubtedly the moſt effectual meaſure which prudence could ſuggeſt to honeſty, for totally removing every poſſibility of obloquy and [g] ſuſpicion. But it was ſuch a meaſure as intereſted men would not have conſented to, and enthuſiaſts would ſcarcely have deviſed.

If from theſe particular tranſactions, we turn our attention to the general mode of conducting the af-

[g] If we allow, what ſeems probable from the names of theſe deacons, which are all *Grecian*, and from the country of one of them, (Antioch) that ſeveral of them were Grecian Proſelytes, it will be an argument of prudence and impartiality in the Chriſtians who choſe them, and in the apoſtles who aſſented to the choice, as ſuch would be ſure to ſee, that the Grecians had juſtice done them in the diſtribution of the charity.—Vid. Pole's Synopſis, on Acts vi. 5. and Pyle's Paraphraſe.

fairs

fairs of the ſociety inſtituted by the apoſtles, we ſhall obſerve an [h] order, regularity, and ſubordination, very remote from the wild and levelling principles of impetuous fanaticiſm.—We find that the parent church at Jeruſalem, over which the apoſtles conſtantly preſided, preſerved a connection, and held occaſional correſpondence with the ſocieties formed in the various cities of Aſia, Greece, and Italy; that miniſters were ſent thence, to inſtruct, to direct, and to preſide over the newly inſtituted churches; [i] that queſtions of moment were, when neceſſary, referred to the deciſion of this parent church; and that to decide them, the apoſtles aſſembled, together with the elders and the great body of the believers at Jeruſalem; held regular debates, in which opinions were diſcuſſed, facts examined, the teſtimony of the miracles wrought by the miſſionaries of the new faith conſidered, the authority of the propheeies appealed to, and determinations formed from a combined view of

[h] Leſt my argument here ſhould be miſunderſtood, I wiſh it to be obſerved, that I do not infer that the apoſtles were free from enthuſiaſm, merely becauſe they formed ſocieties, in which, as they extended, ſome degree of connection with the original ſociety, was maintained, and their own authority as founders of that ſociety preſerved, for ſomething like this has been frequently done by enthuſiaſts; no—I argue from the *order*, the *good ſenſe*, and the *prudence* diſplayed in the conſtitution and the government of this ſociety, which I conceive enthuſiaſts would not have obſerved.

[i] Vid. Acts xv. the 30 firſt verſes. xxi. from 17 to 26. Alſo Acts vi. 1 to 8—20—17th.

all

all theſe various circumſtances; which determinations were reduced to writing, authenticated by the names of the apoſtles, and elders, and brethren, and conveyed by a regular deputation from them to the different churches, for whoſe uſe they were deſigned; by whom theſe determinations were received as final and deciſive. Now, may we not with full confidence aſſert, that ſuch deliberation and order, as this ſyſtem of regulation diſplays, was as inconſiſtent with the wild and levelling fury of enthuſiaſm, as reaſon is inconſiſtent with frenzy, or good government with anarchy and miſrule? Surely then, ſuch a ſyſtem could never have originated with, or been at all maintained by ſenſeleſs fanatics.

SECTION III.

The wiſdom and ſobriety of mind which the apoſtles diſplayed, in the general government of the church, particularly exemplified in their conduct as to the circumciſion of the Gentiles.

THE important [k] queſtion, "whether the Gentiles "converted to Chriſtianity, ſhould be alſo obliged "to obey the Moſaic law," was a ſubject which

[k] Vid. Acts xv. the firſt thirty-four verſes.

affected

affected the moſt deep-rooted prejudices, and roufed the ſtrongeſt paſſions of every Jewiſh mind, on which ſome of the very chief of the apoſtles ſeem to have been divided, if not in opinion, yet in ſome circumſtances of their conduct, and to have [l] expreſſed this difference of ſentiment with conſiderable [m] warmth. This was therefore a caſe in which, if the folly and the violence of enthuſiaſm had exiſted, it would have been almoſt to a certainty diſplayed. But if in this inſtance order and reaſon, truth and ſoberneſs, prevailed, we are, I think, warranted in concluding, that theſe were the leading principles which uniformly directed, not only the apoſtles, but the great body of the primitive Chriſtian church.

[l] Gal. ii. 11 and 12 verſes.

[m] Theſe differences have ſometimes been alledged as a deciſive objection againſt the divine authority of the Chriſtian ſcheme, but ſurely without cauſe. The New Teſtament no where repreſents the apoſtles as infallible or impeccable; it has drawn ONE and ONLY ONE PERFECT character, that of their divine LORD; but Chriſtianity derives more ſtrength of evidence from the impartiality with which its hiſtorians relate their own and their brethrens occaſional errors or faults, than it can ſuffer injury from any imputation which their conduct may ſeem to juſtify. Another ſignal advantage from the relation of theſe diviſions is, that it affords the ſtrongeſt evidence, that the whole ſcheme was founded on truth, not impoſture; for whenever impoſtors, and theſe the very chief conductors of the impoſition, fall into contention and diſpute, the fallacy is inevitably detected. Not ſo with the goſpel; though its teachers might in ſome points for ſome ſhort time diſagree, theſe diſagreements impeded not in the leaſt the completion of their ſacred work—for this was conducted by the hand of God.

Now

Now in order to prove that the apoſtolic decree pronounced on this occaſion was dictated by reaſon and ſobriety, it does not ſeem neceſſary to enter into any minute diſcuſſion of the different opinions which have been advanced, as to its preciſe meaning; it is ſufficient to obſerve, that in whatever ſenſe it is taken, it bears the cleareſt marks of ſuch prudent attention to the peace and welfare of the church, and ſuch charitable condeſcenſion to the prejudices of the well-meaning, as evidently ſhews its authors were not impetuous, overbearing fanatics.

If we take the word *Gentiles* in its obvious ſenſe, to mean all equally, whether devout proſelytes or idolatrous Gentiles, and conſider the reſtrictions from [n] "meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from "things ſtrangled, and from fornication," as addreſſed to *all* Gentile converts, we ſhall find abundant reaſons for joining theſe prohibitions, from their cloſe connection with the prevention of [o] idolatry.

Participation of the meats either offered in the Pagan temples, or avowedly conſecrated to the Pagan gods, would naturally ſeem a tacit acquieſcence in the worſhip of theſe baſe idols, would neceſſarily offend the ſcrupulous Chriſtian, and might perhaps ſednce the yet unſteady proſelyte.—The uſe of blood,

[n] Acts xv. 20, 21, and 29.

[o] Vid. the learned SPENCER, in his diſſertation on Acts xv. 20. annexed to his ſecond book de Legibus Hebræorum ritualibus, vol. i. p. 434. edit. 2.

and

and therefore of things ſtrangled to retain the blood, was conceived by the Heathens to be one mode of [p] holding communication with the inviſible dæmons whom they adored; and every conceivable [q] abomination of impurity was perpetrated by the worſhippers of thoſe foul and vicious monſters, whom what has been termed the [r] "*elegant Mythology of the Greeks*," had exalted into gods, in the very temples of theſe gods, in imitation of their actions, in honour of their memory; nay, as parts of their worſhip. Hence this laſt, though ſo different in its nature, was, in this view, forbidden, together with the former indulgencies, as the worſt companion of idolatry, and the ſtrongeſt temptation to it.

Another reaſon for uniting theſe prohibitions may be found in the prejudices of the Jews, in whoſe law theſe various practices had been forbidden [s] *together*, and who held them in ſuch abhorrence, that they could not converſe freely, or even participate at the table of the Lord with thoſe who uſed *any* of them, and would not believe any who perſevered in one of

[p] Vid. Spencer ut Supra, p. 451, and Patrick on Leviticus, xix. 26. [q] Vid. Spencer, ib. 451. [r] Vid. Gibbon's Hiſtory of the Roman Empire, vol. ii. ch. v.

[s] Vid. Leviticus xvii. and xviii. with Patrick's Commentary; alſo Leviticus xix. verſe 26. ib.—that this was the chief reaſon of uniting theſe prohibitions appears from the expreſs declaration of St. James, who, after propoſing to the council the words of the decree, aſſigns as the reaſon of it—"For Moſes, of old "time, hath in every city them that preach him, being read in "the ſynagogues every ſabbath-day."—Acts xv. 21.

them

them to be ſincere converts from Paganiſm; perhaps alſo, in order to conſult the peace of the church, by not offending the Jews, the [r] fornication here forbidden may have extended, not only to prevent every ſpecies of impurity in general, but particularly to prevent marriage within any of thoſe degrees of conſanguinity in which it was prohibited by the Levitical law.

In this view all theſe prohibitions may have been neceſſary, under the circumſtances then exiſting; and whenever theſe circumſtances ſhould ceaſe to exiſt, by the abolition of the Jewiſh polity, and the general diſuſe of Heathen idolatry, Chriſtians could be at no loſs to diſtinguiſh between the *temporary* obligation to abſtain from meats offered to idols, from blood and things ſtrangled, and the *eternal obligation* to abſtain from every ſpecies of impurity. Their Lord had expreſsly marked out this important diſtinction, [t] "not that which entereth into the mouth "defileth a man, but that which cometh out, even "from the heart; for out of the heart proceed evil

[r] Vid. 1 Cor. v. 1, where the word πορνια is uſed to ſignify an inceſtuous marriage.

[t] Matt. xv. 10 to 20. That all ſuch obſervances are in themſelves indifferent, and compliance with them inculcated merely for the ſake of avoiding offence and diſunion, is beautifully illuſtrated by the apoſtle Paul. Vid. the epiſtle to the Romans, the xivth. ch. and beginning of the xvth. and in the 1ſt. Corinthians, viiith. and xth. chapters, to which I refer the readers, and which will be more particularly conſidered when we come to conſider the moral doctrines of the apoſtles.

thoughts,

" thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, " falſe witneſs, blaſphemies; theſe are they which " defile a man"; but to eat with unwaſhen hands *(and on the ſame ground to eat in any manner prohibited by the Levitical law)* defileth not a man.

If on the other hand we adopt the [u] opinion of thoſe who confine the obligation of this decree to ſuch of the Gentiles as had been previouſly converted from idolatry, and had embraced the worſhip of the true God, as taught by the Jewiſh religion, without however adopting circumciſion, and its other burthenſome ceremonies, another reaſon for theſe prohibitions

[u] This opinion is ſupported by moſt reſpectable authorities, vid. Lord Barrington's Miſcellanea Sacra, vol. ii. p. 255, London 1770; his eſſay on the apoſtolic decree. Dr. Benſon's Hiſtory of Chriſtianity, b. iii. ch. iii. ſect. 4, 5, and 6. and Dr. M'Knight in his preface to the epiſtle to the Galatians, ſect. 4. vol. iii. p. 220. of that edition, conſiſting of four volumes. One of the grand arguments uſed by theſe learned writers, viz. " that if this decree was directed to the proſelytes from amongſt the idolatrous Gentiles, it is ſtill binding on all Chriſtians in every part of it," ſeems to me inconcluſive: the neceſſity of abſtaining from meats offered to idols, and from things ſtrangled, and from blood, aroſe from theſe being parts of idolatrous worſhip, or at leaſt ſo connected with it, as to afford occaſion of ſuſpicion and offence to the Jewiſh proſelytes, and to all weaker Chriſtians; (vid. Spencer, and the paſſages cited from St. Paul) conſequently, where idolatrous worſhip has wholly ceaſed, and no ſuch ground for ſuſpicion and offence can poſſibly exiſt, theſe prohibitions loſe their force, and the uſe of things ſtrangled, and of blood, becomes, what it is in its own nature, a matter of indifference; but I perfectly agree with theſe learned writers in the ſentiment quoted in my text.

ariſes from the *political* privileges to which theſe devout Gentiles (or *proſelytes of the gate*, as they were termed) were entitled, under the Jewiſh ſtate, viz. a liberty of ſettling or ſojourning in Paleſtine, frequenting the Jewiſh ſynagogues, offering ſacrifices in the temples, and enjoying the cities of refuge—privileges which required on their part the obſervance of theſe prohibitions, as a teſt not only of their religious, but their political obedience, and which the goſpel could not free them from ſo long as the Jewiſh polity continued, and theſe privileges were claimed under it; for Chriſtianity in no caſe interfered with the political ſituation, or affected the civil duties or rights of any of its converts. [x] "Hence the apoſtles themſelves obeyed "the Jewiſh law, and adviſed the converts from "amongſt the Jews, and the devout proſelytes, to "continue to do the ſame, not as a neceſſary condi-"tion of ſalvation, but merely as a matter of politi-"cal obligation."

Such was the general ſubſtance of the decree, which evidently ſteers a wiſe medium between the violent partizans of the oppoſite opinions; ſecuring the perpetual freedom of Chriſtians in general from the burthen of the Moſaic law, but carefully guarding againſt the ſeductions of idolatry, or at leaſt yielding to the violent prejudices of the Jews, and the political connection of the devout Gentiles with the Jewiſh

[x] M'Knight as quoted above, p. 227.

ſtate,

ſtate, ſo far as to inculcate the obſervance of ſuch of the Levitical precepts as could not be diſregarded without interrupting the harmony of the church, ſo long as theſe prejudices and that connection continued to exiſt. Surely ſuch a decree was not dictated by an extravagant and ſenſeleſs fanaticiſm.

But beſides the general nature of the decree, if we obſerve the *manner* in which it was *conveyed*, this alſo diſplays the ſame prudent and vigilant attention to the peace of the church.

The advocates for the obſervance of the Jewiſh law had violently oppoſed Barnabas and Paul, and probably calumniated them as preaching a goſpel different from that taught by the original apoſtles of Chriſt. The preamble of the decree, without directly rebuking theſe miſguided zealots, obviates the ill effect of their miſrepreſentations, by deſcribing Paul and Barnabas as "[y] the beloved brethren who "had hazarded their lives for the name of the "Lord Jeſus Chriſt;" but if theſe apoſtles *alone* had been the bearers of the decree, their oppoſers might perhaps have raiſed ſome ſuſpicion of its authenticity and ſtrict correctneſs; the council therefore ſent with them two other preachers, of ſignal reputation and piety, Judas and Silas, who had never been engaged in the conteſt, and would there-

[y] Acts xv. 25.

fore

fore be unſuſpected vouchers of the ſentence pronounced to decide it.

Finally, it is not, I think, poſſible to read over this decree, without admiring the humility and moderation of its concluſion; it enumerates the prohibitions already ſtated, and cloſes with theſe words, "[z] from which if ye keep yourſelves ye ſhall do "well; fare ye well." How different this from the high ſtrains of prieſtly arrogance and papal uſurpation in the corrupted ages of the church; or the bitter invectives of angry reformers, and the wild rants of heated enthuſiaſts, in more modern days? how conformable to that mild and ſober dignity we ſhould expect in men ſpeaking the dictates of genuine inſpiration, and following the example of their meek and humble Lord?

Another remarkable circumſtance, connected with this tranſaction, here preſents itſelf to our conſideration, which ſeems to ſupply an additional proof of the great diſcretion and good ſenſe, as well as the love of peace and harmony which regulated the conduct of the apoſtles. They had, as was remarked, determined that the Gentiles converted to Chriſtianity were under no obligation to ſubject themſelves to the burthen of the entire Moſaic law; but they had alſo determined, that the Jews who

[z] Acts xv. 29.

embraced

embraced the goſpel, might, if they pleaſed, *retain* the obſervance of that law, which from their infancy they had been habituated to revere, becauſe, though not *neceſſary*, yet neither was it *inconſiſtent* with Chriſtianity.——Now this diſtinction was certainly moſt juſt and rational; but it was alſo ſuch a diſtinction as fanatics never would have made, and the conduct obſerved in conſequence of this diſtinction was ſtrikingly conſonant to the ſpirit from whence it originated.

St. Paul, the zealous and ſucceſsful diſſeminator of the goſpel through the wide extent of the Heathen world, returned, after a period of ſeveral years, to Jeruſalem; he viſits the apoſtle James, who remained there, and then preſided over the Jewiſh church, he was received by him, and all the elders aſſembled, and declares particularly the wonders which God had wrought amongſt the Gentiles by his miniſtry, and " when they heard it they glorified " God." But while full of joy and exultation at the progreſs of the goſpel, they were not inattentive to the ſafety of their brother apoſtle, and the peace of the Jewiſh Church.—They knew the violence of many of the Jews would be eaſily rouſed by thoſe who miſtook or miſrepreſented the conduct of St. Paul, and they intreat the apoſtle to act in ſuch a manner, as might prevent the miſchievous conſequences of ſuch an error or calumny; by performing ſome public acts, which ſhould prove that he even then did not think

it inconſiſtent with his Chriſtian character to obſerve the Jewiſh law; and with this requeſt St. Paul immediately and chearfully complied, as in this inſtance his compliance could not injure the cauſe of Chriſtian liberty, while it avoided offending the prejudices of the over-zealous Jew.

The admirable wiſdom and Chriſtian benevolence with which St. Paul conducted himſelf on this difficult ſubject, alſo appears ſtrongly from contraſting his conduct towards two of his favourite converts, and moſt able aſſiſtants, Timotheus and Titus.

[a] The former he prevailed on to ſubmit to circumciſion, and obey the Moſaic law; becauſe, as it was known his mother had been a Jeweſs, his not acting thus would have given occaſion of offence. The latter had been a Gentile, and therefore when it was ſuggeſted that he alſo ſhould be circumciſed, the apoſtle ſteadily refuſed, leſt he ſhould ſeem to eſtabliſh a precedent for ſubjecting the liberty of all the Gentile Chriſtians to the bondage of the law.

Thus admirably did all the apoſtles act up to thoſe principles, which St. Paul has ſo beautifully deſcribed, " [b] giving none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to " the Gentiles, nor to the church of God, even as " I, ſays he, pleaſe all men in all things; not ſeeking

[a] Acts xvi. Gal. ii. 3.

[b] 1 Cor. x. 32.

" mine

" mine own profit, but the profit of many, that " they may be ſaved." Was this enthuſiaſtic deluſion, wild fanaticiſm, extravagant and ill-directed zeal? ſurely not; no, this was the voice of ſoberneſs ſupporting the ſacred cauſe of piety and truth. Let us now direct our attention to ſome more minute, but not leſs convincing proofs, that St. Paul in particular was totally uninfluenced by the extravagance of enthuſiaſm.

SECTION IV.

The conduct of St. Paul in particular was not directed or influenced by enthuſiaſm.

THE conduct of this apoſtle perpetually diſplays a zeal, ardent indeed, and active, but conſtantly united with the obſervance of decorum and propriety, as well as attention to his reputation and his perſonal ſafety, ſo far as was conſiſtent with the diſcharge of his ſacred office, and to a much higher degree than can poſſibly be conceived to exiſt in a mind diſtracted by the frenzy of enthuſiaſm; a few inſtances will illuſtrate and prove this poſition.

[c] When at Philippi he was unjuſtly ſcourged and impriſoned, and the diſcovery of his innocence induced the magiſtrates to give orders for his immediate, but private enlargement; he is not ſatisfied with ſecuring his ſafety, without alſo *guarding his character*, which was expoſed to ſuſpicion and diſgrace, from the ignominious treatment he had received; and he uſes that motive to procure an honourable diſmiſſal, which alone could excite the attention of the magiſtrates.—" They have beaten us (ſays the apoſtle) " openly, uncondemned, being Romans, and have " caſt us into priſon, and now do they thruſt us out " privately; nay, verily, but let them come themſelves " and fetch us out."—The event juſtified the expectation of the apoſtle; for, " the magiſtrates fear- " ed when they heard they were Romans, and came " and beſought them and brought them out."

But having thus vindicated their character, they did not attempt to retaliate the ill uſage they had received, by public or legal complaint, or to irritate the reſentment, and provoke the further vengeance of the magiſtrates, by obſtinate oppoſition; when deſired by them to depart out of the city, they only waited to ſee the brethren, " and when they had ſeen " them, they comforted them, and departed."

The apoſtle diſplays a ſimilar care of his reputation when he enjoins the [d] Corinthians; " whomſoever ye

[c] Acts xvi. xix. 38. [d] 1 Corin. xvi. 1, 4.

" ſhall

" ſhall approve, by your letters, will I ſend to bring " your liberality to Jeruſalem; and if it be meet " that I go alſo, they ſhall go with me." His reaſon he ſtates in [e] another addreſs to them, " and we " have ſent with him, (Titus) the brother, whoſe " praiſe is in the goſpel throughout all the churches; " and not that only, but who was alſo choſen of the " churches to travel with us, with this grace which " is adminiſtered by us, to the glory of the Lord, " and declaration of your ready mind; *avoiding* " *this*, that any man ſhould *blame* us in this *abun-* " *dance* which is *adminiſtered by us, providing for ho-* " *neſt things, not only in the ſight of God, but alſo in the* " *ſight of men.*"—How remote from enthuſiaſm is ſuch cool precaution as *this?*

And as he guarded his character, ſo neither did he neglect his ſafety; true it is, indeed, that no reproaches, no dangers, no puniſhments, could deter him from preaching the goſpel of Chriſt, when ſhame and perſecution were inevitable in diſcharging this ſacred duty; yet it is equally clear, that he employed all innocent means which reaſon could ſuggeſt, conſiſtent with that duty, to elude the rage of malignant bigotry —but he preached the goſpel ſtill.

To eſcape perſecution he fled from [f] Damaſcus,

[e] 2 Corin. viii. 18—21 [f] Acts ix. 25.

from

from [g] Antioch, from [h] Iconium, from [i] Theſſalonica; to avoid being ſcourged, he pleaded his privilege as a Roman citizen. In a violent [k] tumult at Jeruſalem, he preſerved himſelf from inſtant death, by availing himſelf, with admirable preſence of mind, of the contrariety of opinions which prevailed amongſt the different parties of his aſſailants; for when he perceived that one part were Sadducees, and the other Phariſees, he cried out in the council, "men and "brethren I am a Phariſee, the ſon of a Phariſee, "for the hope and reſurrection of the dead I am "called in queſtion;" and the ſcribes of the Phariſees aroſe and ſaid, [l] "we find no evil in this man; "but if a ſpirit or an angel hath ſpoken to him, let "us not fight againſt God." Thus he gained time to obtain the protection of the civil power. With ſimilar prudence he afterwards eſcaped the malignity of aſſaſſination, by appealing to the tribunal of Cæſar; "more than forty [m] Jews bound themſelves by a "curſe, that they would neither eat nor drink, till "they had killed Paul." The apoſtle, on diſcovering the conſpiracy, diſcloſes it ſecretly to the chief captain, whoſe priſoner he then was, and by a ſecret removal eſcapes.

When a ſimilar conſpiracy was afterwards [n] renewed, and the Jews requeſted Feſtus, the governor,

[g] Acts xiii. 50. [h] Acts xiv. 16. [i] Acts xvii. 14.
[k] Acts xxiii. 6, 7. [l] Acts xxiii 9. [m] Acts xxiii. 12. [n] Acts xxv. 3.

to

to bring him back to Jeruſalem, laying wait in the way to kill him, and Feſtus [o] deſires the apoſtle's compliance with this requeſt; how admirably does he, in his reply, guard both his ſafety and his character? "I ſtand, (ſaid he) at Cæſars judgment ſeat, "where I ought to be judged; to the Jews have I "done no wrong, as thou very well knoweſt; for if I "have been an offender, or have committed any thing "worthy of death, I refuſe not to die; but if there "be none of theſe things whereof theſe accuſe me, "no man may deliver me unto them; I appeal unto "Cæſar." How contrary this to the artifice and conſcious guilt of impoſture on the one ſide, or the folly of enthuſiaſm on the other?

At Athens, [p] a ſimilar temper of mind is ſtill more conſpicuous in the conduct of the apoſtle; there, when ſummoned before the auguſt court of Areopagus, to anſwer to an accuſation "of having ſet forth "ſtrange Gods," which their laws pronounced a capital crime, mark his defence—"an impoſtor, "(ſays Lord Littleton, ſpeaking of this tranſaction) "an impoſtor would have retracted his doctrine to "ſave his life; an enthuſiaſt would have loſt his "life without trying to ſave it by innocent means; "St. Paul did neither the one nor the other; he "availed himſelf of an altar, inſcribed *to the un-*

[o] Acts xxv. 9. [p] Acts xvii. 16 to 34. Lyttleton on the converſion of St. Paul, p. 47, note.

"*known*

" *known God*, and pleaded, that he did not propoſe " the worſhip of any new God, but only explained " to the people the nature and attributes of that un- " known Divinity, whom their government had al- " ready received;" " *Whom therefore ye ignorantly* " *worſhip, him declare I unto you; God who made* " *the world, and all things therein, in whom we live,* " *and move, and have our being.*" " Thus he eluded " condemnation, without departing in the leaſt " from the truth of the goſpel, or violating the " honour of his God; an admirable proof of the " *good ſenſe* with which he acted, and that there was " no mixture of fanaticiſm in his religion."

It is further peculiarly worthy of remark, that in all theſe various trying ſituations, in which the apoſtle of the Gentiles was placed, we find him obſervant of thoſe decorums of language, and thoſe diſtinctions of rank, which the intercourſe of ſociety and the preſervation of order require, but which the pride and violence of fanaticiſm almoſt always contemns and tramples on.

He is brought before kings and rulers, to bear teſtimony to the name of Jeſus;—we ſee him as at the tribunal of the Areopagus at Athens, ſo alſo before the council of the chief prieſts at Jeruſalem, before two different Roman governors, and eſpecially before king Agrippa; and to all he yields that tribute of external reſpect which their external ſituation demanded,

manded, without departing in the leaſt item from ſincerity and truth, or debaſing by any mean adulation, or unworthy compliance, the integrity of his character, and the honour of his God. Never does any peeviſh or paſſionate, any rude or contemptuous expreſſion eſcape him. Once, and only once, an unmerited and wanton inſult drew from him an indignant reproach againſt [q] Ananias, who, though he preſided as his judge, commanded the infliction of the inſult; but the moment he is reminded of the character which Ananias bore—the moment they that ſtood by ſaid, "revileſt thou God's high prieſt ſo?" he apologizes and accounts for his warmth, "brethren, I wiſt not that he was the high prieſt, "for it is written, thou ſhalt not ſpeak evil of the "rulers of thy people."

And what is moſt remarkable, the teſtimony of hiſtory renders probable what the apoſtle inſinuates, that Ananias was not in truth high prieſt; but that in a period of anarchy, when the office was unfilled, he raſhly aſſumed that character, which by his inſolence he diſgraced. This ſingle inſtance excepted, (if indeed thus circumſtanced it conſtitutes an exception) the language and conduct of the apoſtle was uniformly temperate and decorous, as it was firm and dignified, naturally reſulting from piety and ſo-

[q] Acts xxiii. 2 to 6.

briety

briety of mind, utterly inconſiſtent with folly and fanaticiſm.

I have dwelt more particularly on the character of St. Paul, not only becauſe his hiſtory is recorded more fully than that of any of his fellow-labourers; but becauſe the natural warmth of his temper, the unremitting activity of his exertions, the fervor of his piety, and the deep ſenſe he expreſſes of the infinite importance of the ſacred cauſe in which he was engaged, and his own unworthineſs for ſuch an office, are circumſtances, all of which ſeem, to ſuperficial and haſty reaſoners, to render the charge of enthuſiaſm againſt him more plauſible than againſt any or all of his aſſociates; therefore if it can plainly and briefly be repelled from him, much more is it void of every ſemblance of reaſon when urged againſt any of the remaining apoſtles.

In truth, I truſt, I may confidently appeal to the candid judgment of every one of my readers, whether on reviewing the facts I have related of the apoſtles' conduct, (and I am not conſcious of having omitted any fact of importance) we can poſſibly believe they were in any degree enthuſiaſts, if that name implies weakneſs and folly, heat and violence, error and deluſion. Have we not proved that they were free from the melancholy, the abſtraction, the auſterity, of enthuſiaſm? that they were ready to labour with their own hands

hands for their ſupport; attentive to the common relations and duties of life; careful to preſerve regularity, ſubordination and peace, in the ſociety over which they preſided; perpetually and ſucceſsfully on their guard againſt every occurrence which might afford any reaſonable ground for ſuſpecting the purity of their intentions, and thus impeding the ſucceſs of their miniſtry; conceding to well-meaning prejudice, as far as conceſſion was allowable; not inattentive to their ſafety when their duty did not demand its ſacrifice; conſiderate and cautious, temperate and decorous, meek and charitable; utterly remote from the blind precipitance, the outrageous fury, the unyielding obſtinacy of enthuſiaſtic minds. In the name of truth and reaſon, can we in plainneſs and ſimplicity of mind aſſert—nay more—ſtake our immortal happineſs on the truth of the aſſertion—that men who ſo lived, and ſo acted, were either intereſted, ſelfiſh impoſtors on the one hand, or wild and viſionary fanatics on the other, or a mixture of both together—at once artful enough to deceive mankind, and at the ſame time mad enough to ſacrifice themſelves, and this, to carry on a deceit, which, inſtead of being (as ſome have wickedly and falſely termed it) a *pious fraud*, would have been the moſt impious and blaſphemous impoſture, which human imagination can conceive; exalting a crucified deceiver, a man rejected and abandoned of God, as the Son of God, and judge of the world.—No

ſurely

ſurely—ſuch cool art united with ſuch wild fanaticiſm, is a contradiction in nature—ſuch ſacrifices for ſuch a deception, are wholly unparalled and incredible.

CHAP.

CHAPTER IV.

The writings of the apoſtles and evangeliſts were free from the characters of enthuſiaſm, proved in this chapter of the hiſtorical works of the New Teſtament.

SECTION I.

The ſtile and temper in which the hiſtorical works of the New Teſtament are compoſed, conſidered.

IN the preceding chapters I have endeavoured to prove that the apoſtles and evangeliſts were free from the two primary and eſſential characteriſtics of fanaticiſm, weak credulity and imperious dogmatiſm; I have alſo traced their conduct, and I truſt this has appeared rational, temperate, and meek; the very reverſe of that which the impetuoſity of enthuſiaſm would naturally produce. I now proceed to conſider their writings, the ſtile in which they are compoſed, the temper of mind which they diſplay, and the facts which they detail; in all, I truſt, we ſhall perceive "thoſe things which become ſound "doctrine," and evince a divine original.

What

What then are the characters which reaſon would lead us to expect, and which experience proves generally prevail in the compoſitions of enthuſiaſts? In ſuch men the imagination is violently heated, a confuſion of ideas enſues, the ſtile becomes forced and obſcure, full of myſterious and metaphorical, dark and diſtorted alluſions; with this obſcurity is moſt frequently combined an exaggerated and extravagant ſtrain of thought and expreſſion; nothing is attributed to natural cauſes; every thing is ſpiritualized and magnified; common events are deſcribed as ſecret providences, uncommon as decided miracles: but neither the obſcurity nor the exaggeration of enthuſiaſm are ſo conſpicuous or ſo offenſive, as the heat and violence, the arrogance and bitterneſs, which are too frequently found in ſuch men as conceive themſelves to be the only favourites of heaven, and pronounce the reſt of mankind to be alienated from, and offenſive to God, and who naturally betray this ſelf-exaltation and uncharitableneſs by a ſtrain of affected humility, and real oſtentation, by overbearing dogmatiſm and virulent invective.

Thus obſcurity and extravagance, ſelf-exaltation and uncharitableneſs, are the natural characters of enthuſiaſtic compoſitions. Now compare theſe with the ſtile of the hiſtorical works of the New Teſtament, and the contraſt is ſurely moſt clear and deciſive. In theſe compoſitions ſimplicity of ſtile and ſtructure, and its attendant perſpicuity, form the leading

leading features; every thing is clear, unforced, unadorned; the ſentences are ſhort and intelligible; the language plain and natural; no ſuperfluous or far-fetched epithets—no accumulation of ſynonimous, or nearly ſynonimous words, to amplify or impreſs the ideas of the ſpeaker—no involved circumlocutions—no effort to expreſs things in a bold, emphatical manner. This ſimplicity of ſtile and ſtructure is eſſentially connected with, and evidently ariſes from the [r] ſimplicity of the deſign. The writers of theſe narrations appear ſolely "as Chriſt's humble attendants, ſelected for introducing to the knowledge of others this infinitely higher character, who is himſelf in a pre-eminent ſenſe, the mouth, and the oracle of God;" it is this ſubordinate part which they profeſſedly and uniformly act. Struck with the ineffable dignity of the Meſſiah whom they ſerve, they loſe no opportunity of exhibiting him to the world, and appear to conſider the introduction of their own opinions, conjectures or reaſonings, unleſs where they make a part of the narration, as an impertinence; they ſink themſelves in order to place him in the moſt conſpicuous point of view; they preach not themſelves, but Chriſt Jeſus, the Lord. Hence in the hiſtorical part of the New Teſtament, we never find the leaſt trace of any attempt to ſhine by ſtudied expreſſion, compoſition, or

[r] Vid. Dr. George Campbell's preliminary diſſertation to his tranſlation of the goſpels, in 2 vols. 4to. Lond. 1789—vol. 1ſt. 3d diſſertation, § 4, p. 66, § 18, p. 82, and § 24, p. 95.

ſentiment;

ſentiment; plainneſs of language is always preferred, becauſe the beſt adapted to all capacities, though in a ſtile by no means ſlovenly, yet in little points, as about thoſe grammatical accuracies, which do not affect the meaning and perſpicuity of the ſentence, rather careleſs than curious. In this ſort of ſimplicity our Lord's biographers peculiarly excel; and ſurely this is very oppoſite to the turgid and obſcure productions of a mind inflated and confuſed by fanaticiſm.

But the turn of thought and expreſſion, is not only clear and intelligible, but in the higheſt degree moderate and calm; ſo far from exaggerating trifles into importance, and indulging the extravagancies of enthuſiaſm, that the moſt ſtriking diſplays of wiſdom, the moſt engaging exertions of beneficence, calculated to rouſe the warmeſt admiration and gratitude, are related with perfect coolneſs, without any marks of wonder, or exclamations of ſympathy: nay further, the moſt ſtupendous exertions of miraculous power—the courſe of nature ſuſpended—all manner of diſeaſes healed by a word—the winds and waves controuled by their maſter's voice; and even the depths of the grave yielding back the dead to life at his command. Events ſuch as theſe, the hiſtory of which we cannot peruſe without aſtoniſhment, which ſeem neceſſarily to call forth the ſtrongeſt expreſſions of wonder and reverence, the boldeſt flights of enraptured eloquence; even theſe are related as coolly as

as the moſt common occurrences, laid before the reader with all their minuteſt circumſtances, but laid before him briefly and plainly, without any attempt to magnify their greatneſs or their conſequences.

The ſame calmneſs of mind is equally conſpicuous in the unimpaſſioned, but not unfeeling manner in which the evangeliſts relate the cruel ſufferings of their divine Lord, as well as the obſtinacy, the perverſeneſs, the inſatiable malignity of his enemies; in all their narration, not one opprobrious epithet, not one ſevere expreſſion eſcapes them; can any thing more ſtrongly diſtinguiſh them from fanatics, whoſe fury and hatred perpetually burſt forth, when rouſed by oppoſition of any kind, much more when ſuch oppoſition inflicts the ſevereſt perſonal injuries, and purſues with contempt and perſecution the moſt ſacred objects of religious reverence? Such calmneſs, rarely, if ever attained by philoſophic wiſdom, is ſurely utterly inconſiſtent with fanaticiſm.

On this ſubject it has been well obſerved by a [s] judicious writer, "that as you find in the works of "the apoſtles and evangeliſts no inconſiſtent ravings, "nothing of the madneſs or extravagance of enthu-"ſiaſm, ſo neither do you find any bold high ex-"preſſions, importing indecent familiarity with the

[s] Dr. M'Knight, in his truth of the goſpel hiſtory, 4to. p. 427.

" Divinity, no bitter invectives againſt the religion " of the country where they preached, no abuſive " language of perſons or things deemed ſacred, no " proud exaltation of their own merits, no indignant " reprobation of their countrymen, who had rejected " and crucified their divine Lord, and ſtill oppoſed " his religion and perſecuted his followers; no diſ- " regard and contempt of the reſt of mankind for " blindneſs and idolatry." They declare, indeed, that all mankind labour under ſin; they call men every where to repent; and proclaim Chriſt Jeſus, as the only name under heaven by which men can be ſaved; but theſe ſacred truths are delivered, not with pride and arrogance, but with the deepeſt humility and ſelf-abaſement; and we find them all diſclaiming all power and holineſs of their own, not once only, and merely for formſake, but repeatedly, and from the heart.

On this ſubject an [t] obſervation has been made, which though ſomewhat refined and minute, ſeems juſt and important, and peculiarly illuſtrates that calmneſs and candour, which, it is contended, repel from the evangeliſts all ſuſpicion of their being actuated by the heat and violence of fanaticiſm. It is this, that our Lord's biographers ſeldom bring for-

[t] Vid. Dr. G. Campbell, as quoted above, diſſertation iii. ſect. 22. p. 87 to 90. This learned writer carries the obſervation farther than I do: ſo far as it is neceſſary for my argument, its juſtice will not, I truſt, ſeem doubtful.

ward

ward the names of thoſe of whom they can mention nothing but to their diſgrace, except when there ſeems to be ſome neceſſity for thus particularly marking them out, in order to authenticate ſome parts of the hiſtory in which theſe perſons were materially concerned. Thus, in the goſpels, the names of the high prieſts, the Tetrarch of Galilee, the Roman governor, and the treacherous diſciple, are all that are particularly mentioned of thoſe who were active in the proſecution and death of our Lord; and in the Acts, none are particularly named who were engaged in the perſecution of the Chriſtians, except ſome of the Roman magiſtrates, the kings Agrippa and Herod, the high prieſt Ananias, and the orator Tertullus—all of whom, from their high rank or other circumſtances, were the moſt diſtinguiſhed actors in the events recorded, whoſe names could not have been wholly ſuppreſſed, without ſtripping the hiſtory of thoſe particulars, which at this day form the ſtrongeſt marks of its authenticity and truth.

Thus alſo we can account for the particular mention made of the crimes of Ananias, and Sapphira, and Elymas, becauſe theſe perſons were themſelves the ſubjects of ſignal miraculous interferences, which would have loſt much of their credibility, had they been related merely in general terms, without ſpecifying the occaſions which gave riſe to them, and the individuals on whom they had been wrought.

Theſe inſtances excepted, the evangeliſts ſeem uniformly rather to ſuppreſs than to particularize names, when what truth compels them to ſay is to the diſadvantage of the perſons. Thus, they omit the name of the officer who ſmote our Lord on the face at his trial, adding inſult to cruelty and injuſtice; of the falſe witneſſes againſt him; of the malefactor who upbraided him while hanging on the croſs. Thus alſo in the Acts, thoſe who firſt diſputed with [u] Stephen, and afterwards ſuborned falſe witneſſes to take away his life; the [x] forty Jews who conſpired to aſſaſſinate Paul, are all paſſed by without ſpecification.—Now it is moſt evident, that this conduct in our Lord's hiſtorians did not ariſe from a fear of making enemies. The unvaried ſteadineſs of their preaching, and the noble firmneſs of their martyrdom, ſupply proofs of fortitude too clear to be diſputed; and the ſame ſpirit appears even in the circumſtances now alluded to, for they have in fact named moſt of thoſe who were poſſeſſed of ſuch an authority, or actuated by ſuch a diſpoſition, as could render their reſentment an object of terror; no, their reſerve was evidently in the true ſpirit of their divine Maſter. They do not, without ſome evident neceſſity, bring forward the names of thoſe whom they muſt mention only to diſgrace; they direct our contempt and hatred againſt the crimes, not the perſons of men; againſt the vices not againſt the vicious. Aware that this laſt direction

[u] Acts vi. 9. [x] Acts xxiii. 12.

would

would be of the moſt dangerous tendency to genuine charity, they ſhew no diſpoſition to hold up any man to the Chriſtians of their own time as an object either of their fear or their abhorrence, or to tranſmit his name with infamy to poſterity;—while on the contrary they chearfully particularize thoſe to whoſe faith and gratitude, love and piety, they can bear honourable teſtimony, thus to excite a noble emulation.

Still more ſtrongly to evince the candour and impartiality of the ſacred writers, qualities ſo inconſiſtent with the violence and preſumption of enthuſiaſm, it is worthy of remark, that they not only never load their enemies with any opprobrious epithets, but that they ſometimes ſpeak of them in honourable and reſpectful terms. Thus at Antioch, in Piſidia, when the Jews raiſed ſuch a perſecution againſt Paul as to drive him from the city, the inhabitants whom they prevailed on to join in this perſecution are ſpoken of, not with abuſe or bitterneſs, but [y] "*as devout and honourable women, and the chief* "*men of the city.*" The title of philoſopher is not denied to thoſe Athenians who ſpoke of Paul as a babbler, and dragged him, as a violator of the laws, before the court of Areopagus; and the prieſts and rulers who were moſt active in the perſecution of the apoſtles, are always denoted by the honourable titles

[y] Acts xiv. 50.

which

which officially belonged to them, without any remark on the depravity of their perſonal character, or its inconſiſtency with their official duty.

The ſtrongeſt proof of the candour and humility of the ſacred writers, is however found in the manner in which they ſpeak of their own characters, and their own weakneſſes and faults; here all is open and undiſguiſed; no ſecret is made of the names or the tranſgreſſions of any of the apoſtles; the ſlowneſs of their underſtanding, their prejudices and bigotry, their temporal views and contentions for power, their deſertion of their divine Maſter in the hour of diſtreſs, the accidental differences which occurred in the courſe of their miniſtry, are all fully and plainly related. The crime of Peter in denying his Lord, and that of Paul in his bitter perſecution of the church, are not ſuppreſſed, though their reputation muſt have ſeemed ſo eſſential to the Chriſtian cauſe, and their tranſitory, though great offences, were followed by a whole life of penitence.—Not to multiply inſtances, enough ſurely has been ſaid, to ſhew that the hiſtorians of the New Teſtament were wholly free from the heat, and bigotry, and preſumption, which ſo generally characteriſe fanaticiſm. Let me not, however, be underſtood to aſſert, that the evangeliſts never ſpeak of offenders with ſeverity; far otherwiſe. I am well aware, there are inſtances which may ſeem exceptions to the general principles I have endeavoured to eſtabliſh; but I am confident

a little

a little attention will prove they *only ſeem* to be exceptions, but that in reality they confirm the truth of theſe principles; becauſe in every inſtance where this ſeverity occurs, it is evidently, not only juſtified, but almoſt extorted by the nature of the crime which they rebuke; and it is remarkable, that almoſt every offender thus rebuked, diſplays that peculiar ſpecies of character, on which mildneſs and mercy would be as ineffectual, as it would certainly be unmerited, even an hypocritical and mercenary mind, which reſiſts the conviction of truth from ſordid worldly views, or abuſes the ſacred name of religion, to conceal and ſanctify malignity or avarice. Such was the general character of the Phariſees, againſt whom alone their mild and benevolent Lord had poured forth keen and indignant reproach; and ſuch were the individuals whom the apoſtles loaded with well-merited condemnation. [z] Ananias and Sapphira, whom avarice, united with hypocriſy, and a ſecret contempt for that divine Authority which they profeſſed to obey, tempted to lie, not unto men, but unto God, experienced a ſevere but juſt puniſhment. [a] Simon, who had employed the baſe frauds of ſorcery to delude the Samaritans to beſtow divine honours on himſelf, and who preſerved the ſame audacious impiety, even after he had pretended to embrace the pure religion of the goſpel, offering the apoſtles money to purchaſe the power of the Holy Ghoſt,

[z] Acts v. [a] Acts viii.

well

well deſerved the ſevere rebuke of St Peter; "thy "money periſh with thee, becauſe thou haſt thought "the gift of God could be purchaſed with money; "thou haſt neither part nor lot in this matter, for "thy heart is not right with God; repent there-"fore of this thy wickedneſs, and pray God, if "perhaps the thought of thine heart may be for-"given, for I perceive thou art in the gall of bitter-"neſs, and the bond of iniquity."

[b] Elymas, a man of a ſimilar character, for he alſo was a ſorcerer, withſtood the preaching of St. Paul, ſeeking (doubtleſs from ſelfiſh motives) to turn away the Roman governor from the faith; his malignant and intereſted oppoſition wrung from the apoſtle the ſevereſt rebuke which he ever pronounced; but its juſtice was atteſted by the miraculous blindneſs which divine Power enabled him to inflict: thus the occa-ſional ſeverity of the apoſtles was wholly free from the violence of enthuſiaſm; it was dictated by truth and approved by heaven.

But, except in theſe inſtances, we perceive, that on the moſt trying occaſions the apoſtles imitate the unexampled benignity of their divine Lord, who, in the agonies of death, prayed for his murderers, "Father forgive them, for they know not what "they do." The apoſtles alſo alledge this the only extenuation of their enemies guilt, which the eye of

[b] Acts xiii.

mercy

mercy could trace—" Ye denied the holy one, ſays " [c] St. Peter, and deſired a murderer to be granted " to you, and killed the Prince of Life; and now, " brethren, I wot that *through ignorance* ye did it, " as did alſo your rulers; but thoſe things which " God before had ſhewed by the mouth of all his " prophets, that Chriſt ſhould ſuffer, he hath ſo " fulfilled; repent ye therefore and be converted, " that your ſins may be blotted out."—Such is the whole tenor of their ſtile; and ſurely this is very oppoſite to the fury of enflamed enthuſiaſm.

SECTION II.

The facts of the evangelic hiſtory conſidered.

FROM the ſtile and thought let us turn to the facts recorded by the evangeliſts. We know the ſort of facts on which enthuſiaſts dwell with peculiar complacency, having no others to produce in ſupport of their divine authority. They generally abound, like the hiſtory of Mahomet, with the accounts of nocturnal viſions, in which the authors are admitted to an immediate converſe with angels, nay, even the Deity himſelf, and behold the glories of other worlds, which

[c] Acts iii. 17.

they

they minutely and rapturouſly deſcribe. Sometimes, like the prieſteſſes of old, overpowered by the ſuppoſed influence of their God, in the dark receſſes of their temples; or, like the devotees, proſtrate at the tombs of modern ſaints, their inſpiration is diſplayed by convulſions and agitations, which, when numbers are collected, paſs like an electric ſhock from ſoul to ſoul; ſometimes like the celebrated Lord Herbert (the firſt patron of the deiſtical ſcheme in modern days) when wound up to the height of devotion, they miſtake the voice of a ſtill ſmall wind as a voice from God; they receive anſwers to their prayers in raptures and extacies, ſecret whiſpers and ſudden illuminations, which have no connection with any aſcertainable facts, and preclude the poſſibility of either proof or confutation.

Such are the circumſtances which almoſt univerſally form the ſubject of enthuſiaſtic details. Now compare with theſe the plain facts, the ſenſible open miracles of the goſpel hiſtory. Throughout the four evangeliſts not one viſion to any of the writers is ſo much as mentioned; angels indeed are ſaid to have appeared at our Saviour's birth and reſurrection, and ſome other occaſions, when their interpoſition was neceſſary to execute ſome important purpoſe by their ſupernatural aid, or to convey glad tidings of great joy to all mankind. But theſe appearances are delivered clearly and plainly, and verified by the whole ſeries of ſubſequent events. Voices from heaven are

alſo

alſo ſaid to have been heard; but they are all at open day, twice in the preſence of multitudes.—Firſt, at the baptiſm of our Lord by John, when his divine character was ſolemnly proclaimed by a voice from heaven; and again, when the application of ſome [d] Grecians to be admitted to his preſence, preſaged the diffuſion of his kingdom to the remoteſt ends of the earth: a ſimilar voice is related to have been heard, in the preſence of three diſciples, when our Lord, [e] on the Mount, appeared to them in the anticipated glory of his heavenly majeſty. In the Acts only two viſions are related, not accompanied by any miraculous fact, [f] one calling Paul to preach in Macedonia; and the other, that which appeared to Peter, to prepare him for communicating to the Roman, [g] Cornelius, the knowledge of the goſpel, and thus breaking down that wall of partition which had ſo long divided the heathen world from the choſen people of God, one of the moſt important ſteps in the promulgation of the Chriſtian ſcheme; and this viſion is as fully atteſted as its importance requires, being three times repeated, confirmed by a correſpondent viſion to Cornelius himſelf, and connected with the whole ſeries of ſubſequent events.—If the apoſtles are frequently ſaid to have been determined by the Spirit how they ſhould act, and where they ſhould go, ſuch aſſertions are vindicated from the charge of enthuſiaſm, by comparing them

[d] John xii. 27. [e] Matt. xvii. [f] Acts xvi. [g] Acts x.

with

with the deciſive manifeſtations of the ſame ſpirit in the miracles it enabled them to perform, and the ſucceſs which ſuch miracles only were adequate to obtain.

To conclude this view of the facts which conſtitute the ſubject of the goſpel hiſtory, I would peculiarly call the attention of my reader to the conſideration of one grand object which pervades and connects the whole, and which ſeems ſufficient of itſelf to prove that this hiſtory could not have been the production of enthuſiaſts—I mean the CHARACTER AND CONDUCT OF CHRIST JESUS. In whatever view we conſider this unparalleled, this divine Character, we cannot believe it poſſible, that if it never had exiſted enthuſiaſts would have been able to invent it; or even if it had exiſted, to deſcribe it undebaſed by any mixture of their own folly and extravagance.—Without attempting to delineate all the features of this conſummate character, let me point out a few which ſeem moſt inconſiſtent with the ſuppoſition of its having been invented or deſcribed by any fanatic.

It is then not difficult to prove that the character and conduct of Chriſt united all the apparently inconſiſtent qualities, which the Jewiſh prophets declared ſhould belong to the Meſſiah, while they excluded every quality which the worldly minds of the warm and bigotted Jews had led them to expect. Now could wild and ſenſeleſs fanatics have been able, even in a

fictitious

fictitious character, to maintain a coincidence ſo exact and natural, but at the ſame time ſo unthought of, and unexpected, and this through ſuch a variety of particulars apparently ſo diſcordant? would they have deſcribed the Meſſiah as of the royal houſe of David, of the tribe of Judah, and born in Bethlehem, yet the reputed ſon of a carpenter, brought forth and nurtured in poverty, and ſo long reſident in Nazareth, as to be ſtigmatized by the title of Nazareth and Galilean? [h] Would enthuſiaſts have deſcribed him as appearing, when only twelve years old, in the temple, amidſt the moſt learned teachers and doctors of the ſynagogue, and aſtoniſhing them by his underſtanding and anſwers; yet for eighteen years after making no further diſplay of his ſupernatural wiſdom or power, but remaining ſubject unto his parents till the due period came for commencing his miniſtry, and manifeſting forth his glory by public miracles? Would enthuſiaſts have deſcribed him as acting with a dignity ſuitable to the ſpiritual king of Iſrael, and the Son of God, and yet appearing humble and poor, not having where to lay his head, deſpiſed and rejected of men?—Would enthuſiaſts have deſcribed him as exhibiting in his doctrines, and his works, the cleareſt proofs of his being the expected Meſſiah, and on ſafe occaſions, and to fit perſons plainly, declaring his claim to that character; yet to the chief prieſts and Phariſees, who had formed falſe concep-

[h] Vid. Supra, ch. i. § 3.

tions

tions of the Meſſiah, declining to anſwer by what authority he acted, and what office he bore, and keeping back all direct aſſertions of his high dignity, when ſuch open claim would have expoſed his intentions, and his religion to calumny and miſrepreſentation.—In fine, would enthuſiaſts have deſcribed him as confining his perſonal inſtructions, and during his own life the inſtructions of his diſciples, to the houſe of Iſrael? yet declaring, that the effect of introducing his religion would be, "[1] that the king-"dom of God ſhould be taken from them, and "given to a nation bringing forth the fruits "thereof;" and, at his aſcenſion, commanding his diſciples to go forth and baptize in all nations.

Not to purſue further particulars, it ſeems moſt evident, that the caution and wiſdom, the enlarged views and unvaried conſiſtency of our Saviour's conduct, ſo admirably adapted to the unprecedented character in which he appeared, and the critical circumſtances in which he was placed, were ſuch as weak and viſionary fanatics could neither have invented or deſcribed; ſtill leſs can we ſuppoſe, that ſuch men would have been competent to delineate from their own diſordered imaginations a MORAL CHARACTER ſuch as that of Jeſus; a character diſplaying piety the moſt fervent, without any mixture of myſticiſm or extravagance; manners moſt ſtrict

[1] Matt. xxi. 43.

and

and pure, but neither unſociable or auſtere; patriotiſm and friendſhip, untinctured by narrow prejudice or weak partiality; the deepeſt abhorrence of guilt and the warmeſt zeal for reformation, combined with the moſt conſiderate indulgence to frailty, and the moſt heartfelt pity to offenders; a character, in which frankneſs and diſcretion, dignity and meekneſs, fortitude and tenderneſs, exquiſite ſenſibility and patient reſignation, were ſo blended and tempered together in the compoſition of his heavenly mind, that while the moſt cloſe ſearching wiſdom cannot but confeſs the ſpotleſs perfection of this great example, the humbleſt virtue may aſpire to its imitation, with a full aſſurance, that the effort is as certainly ſuited to the weakneſs of human nature, as it is evidently conducive to its perfection and happineſs, and plainly conformable to the divine command.

Now, is it conceivable, that weak extravagant enthuſiaſts could have conceived ſuch a character as this? nay further, does not the *manner* in *which this character diſcovers itſelf to us*, appear as inconſiſtent with ſuch a ſuppoſition as the character itſelf? Would enthuſiaſts have been able to draw ſuch a character, not merely by deſcriptions and words, but by a long narration of facts, and repetition of diſcourſes naturally and regularly connected, perpetually ariſing from, and illuſtrative of each other, involving a conſtant reference to times, places, and perſons,

perſons, and bearing every poſſible mark of reality, and theſe related with the moſt perfect calmneſs and coolneſs, as well as with the artleſs ſimplicity and aſſured confidence of truth?

I truſt it has thus been ſhewn that the ſacred records of the New Teſtament contain, in their ſtile and ſtructure, in the ſpirit they breath, and the facts they detail, ſtrong marks of their undoubted truth, and their divine original.

CHAP.

CHAPTER V.

SECTION I.

The Epiſtles of St. Paul were not dictated by enthuſiaſm; their obſcurity is conſidered in this ſection.

IN the laſt chapter I have examined the hiſtorical works of the New Teſtament; and it has, I truſt, appeared, that they are entirely free from thoſe characters which the details of enthuſiaſts almoſt univerſally exhibit. The perſpicuity, and the calmneſs of ſtile, in which they are compoſed—the conſiſtency, the importance, and the very nature of the facts they detail—and above all, the meek and merciful ſpirit which they breath, totally repel every ſuſpicion that thoſe ſacred narrations were dictated by fanaticiſm: but it cannot be denied that the epiſtles of St. Paul do not ſo evidently repel a ſimilar ſupicion. In many paſſages they diſplay an obſcurity and warmth, which have been imputed, with ſome plauſibility, to the myſticiſm and the violence of an enthuſiaſtic mind.

It ſhall therefore be the ſubject of this chapter to enquire, whether the degree of obſcurity and warmth, found in theſe epiſtles, may not be fully accounted for, without obliging us to impute them to fanaticiſm; and whether, in the ſame writings, we may not diſcover ſuch clear traces of ſtrong reaſoning, ſober judgment, and even of refined addreſs, as may fully ſatisfy us, that the great apoſtle of the Gentiles, however animated and zealous, was very far removed from extravagance and enthuſiaſm.

One cauſe of obſcurity there is, which though in a certain degree common to all the writings of the New Teſtament, muſt affect thoſe parts which like the epiſtles of St. Paul, are principally employed in expounding the doctrines of Chriſtianity, more than thoſe which are, for the moſt part, details of facts.—This was the neceſſity, not only of alluding to a variety of laws and cuſtoms at that time familiar to all, but obſcure to us who live in ſo remote a region, and at ſo diſtant an age, but alſo the neceſſity of employing many Greek words, in a ſenſe very different from that which they bore in Heathen authors.

It is the obſervation of Mr. [k] Locke, "that the "ſubjects treated of in theſe epiſtles, are ſo wholly

[k] Mr. Locke's preface to his commentary on the Galations, paragraph the 3d. vol. the 3d. of his works, page 100—6th edit. in 3 vol. folio, Lond. 1759.

new,

" new, and the doctrines contained in them ſo per-
" fectly remote from the notions that mankind had
" been previouſly acquainted with, that moſt of the
" important terms in them have quite a different ſig-
" nification from what they bear in other diſ-
" courſes."

It is, indeed, [1] obvious that Greek, in what is termed its claſſical purity, could not furniſh words to convey juſt ideas of religious ſubjects, eſpecially where the Chriſtian diſpenſation contained doctrines entirely new, or ſuch as were derived from the Jewiſh religion, to be explained only by a reference to the doctrines and the rites of the Moſaic law, or the writings of the Jewiſh prophets; hence the writers of the New Teſtament were compelled to borrow their expreſſions from the law and the prophets; to employ Greek words, whoſe meaning would be determined, rather by their analogy to the Hebrew terms, to which they moſt nearly correſponded, than by their original derivation; and to combine them according to the idioms of the Hebrew and Syriac languages, rather than the natural conſtruction of Grecian phraſeology: but ſurely the obſcurity which may ariſe from this cauſe, bears no reſemblance to that which attends the myſticiſm of incoherent fanatics.

[1] Vid. Dr. Macknight, in his general preface to his new tranſlation of St. Paul's epiſtles, § 3—vol. 1. p. 26, of the edition in 4 vols.

It is, indeed, peculiarly worthy of remark, that this is one of the many inſtances in which thoſe very circumſtances, which the raſhneſs of infidelity has preſumed to arraign, as inconſiſtent with the ſuppoſition of a divine interference in the promulgation of Chriſtianity, are found, on ſober enquiry, to contribute materially to ſtrengthen the evidence of thoſe facts, on which the proof of that interference depends.

Thus, in the preſent caſe, if we ſuppoſe this cauſe of obſcurity in the ſacred writings, removed by the total abſence of all Hebrew and Syriac phraſes and idioms, and that the divine Spirit, which actuated the apoſtles and evangeliſts, had ſuffered no phraſe to drop from them, which did not conform to the ſtricteſt purity of the Grecian dialect, as ſome [m] ſcorners have required it ſhould; what would be the effect (other circumſtances remaining the ſame?) undoubtedly we ſhould loſe the very "[n] firſt and "principal mark of authenticity in the New Teſtament," even its language. This, as the celebrated Michaelis obſerves, is "diſtinguiſhed by Hebraiſms "and Syriaſms, which afford the ſtrongeſt preſumption in its favour, as they ſhew it to have been "written by men of Hebrew origin, a production "therefore of the firſt century; ſince, after the de-

[m] Lord Shaftſbury in his characteriſtics.

[n] Vid. Michaelis's introduction to the New Teſtament, tranſlated by Marſh, chap. ii. § 10. vol. 1. p. 45.

"ceaſe

" ceaſe of the firſt Jewiſh converts to Chriſtianity,
" we find hardly any inſtance of Jews who turned
" preachers of the goſpel, and the Chriſtian fathers
" were, for the moſt part, totally ignorant of He-
" brew. This diſtinguiſhing mark is to be found
" in all the books of the New Teſtament, though in
" different degrees, even in the epiſtles of St. Paul,
" and the Acts of the apoſtles; though the former
" ſufficiently evince that the author was maſter of
" the Greek, and the latter contains various exam-
" ples, not only of pure, but elegant language; nor
" have theſe idioms the appearance of art or deſign,
" being exactly ſuch as might be expected from per-
" ſons, who uſed a language ſpoken indeed where
" they lived, but not the dialect of their country."

But to this eminent writer himſelf I refer my reader, for further illuſtration of this important argument. It is ſufficient, for my preſent purpoſe, to obſerve, that the obſcurity from this cauſe muſt peculiarly affect St. Paul's [9] epiſtles, becauſe the ſubject they treat of, were very frequently connected with the Jewiſh religion; and ſtill more, becauſe ſeveral of theſe epiſtles were deſigned principally for the peruſal of the Jews. Thus, the whole epiſtle to the Galatians, the argumentative part of the epiſtle to the Romans, many paſſages in the epiſtles to the Corinthians, the Coloſſians, and the Philippians, to Timo-

[9] Michaelis, ch. iv. § 4, p. 118.

thy

thy and Titus, are employed in diſcuſſing the controverſy, concerning the obligation of the Moſaic law on the converts to Chriſtianity, or in reprehending and calming the diſſentions it had raiſed. If we add the epiſtle to the Hebrews, this is principally occupied in explaining the prieſthood and interceſſion of Chriſt, by its analogy to the Jewiſh prieſthood and worſhip. Hence the language which the apoſtle would naturally uſe, was alſo beſt adapted to his purpoſe—" [p] born at Tarſus, his native language was " Greek; but being a Jew, and accuſtomed from " his childhood to read the Septuagint tranſlation, " from the Old Teſtament into Greek, it was na- " tural to ſuppoſe, his language would be tinctured " by Hebraiſms—nor has he ever ſtudied to avoid " the air of a Jew or a Cilician; indeed, the half " of his readers would have thought it a token of " contempt, if he had rejected a language which " he ſpake in common with themſelves. Thus the " fear of giving offence to the Jews, to whom he " wiſely accommodated, whenever it was allowable, " both his doctrine and his manner, in order to win " them to his party, and the ſeeming impropriety " of deviating from a language, that was already " conſecrated to the ſervice of religion, might have " determined him to neglect a ſtyle that would have " been more elegant and more faſhionable; but on " the ſubject which St. Paul diſcuſſed, endued per-

[p] Michaelis, ch. iv. §. 8. p. 152, 155, and 156.

" haps

" haps with leſs [q] energy and preciſion, the venera-
" ble expreſſions of the bible, and the terms of reli-
" gion, which had acquired a preſcriptive right from
" the practice of the ſynagogue, were highly proper,
" and even neceſſary, in delivering the doctrines of
" Chriſtianity; and when once admitted into the
" dogmatical parts of his diſcourſe an attick elegance
" would have made a uſeleſs contraſt in the re-
" mainder of his epiſtles."

Thus does an eminent [r] critic defend the apoſtle, for thoſe deviations from the purity of the Greek ſtyle, which have been the ſubject of ſo much obloquy from the adverſaries of Chriſtianity, and which have probably rendered it more difficult to interpret the

[q] It is the obſervation of Blackwall, which I think he ſupports by ſtriking examples, that the Hebraiſms which are admitted into the New Teſtament, and the alluſions to oriental cuſtoms, frequently expreſſed the ideas of the writer, with more vigor than any other idiom would admit. He further remarks, that even in theſe, regard has been had to the genuine analogy, and true propriety of Grammar; ſo that we may find expreſſions ſimilar to the Hebraiſms of the New Teſtament in Plato, Herodotus, and the beſt Greek writers, while other Hebrew forms of expreſſion, though ſcarce bolder or harſher than theſe, are never uſed by the ſacred writers, becauſe they would have been violations of the analogy and cuſtom of the Greek and Roman languages, as never admitted into them, or uſed by their approved writers. Of ſuch Hebraiſms as theſe he gives many inſtances; vid. Blackwall's ſacred claſſicks, defended and illuſtrated, part i. paſſim, and part ii. chap. i. ſect. 1.

[r] Michaelis, ch. iv. §. 8. p. 155, 156.

epiſtles

epiſtles of St. Paul,[5] than it would have been, had it been poſſible to avoid all ſuch deviations. It is however obvious, that this ſpecies of obſcurity was, in a great degree, an inevitable conſequence from the nature of the ſubjects which the apoſtle treated of, and that ſo far as it was voluntary, it aroſe from motives of humility and prudence, very inconſiſtent with the genius of enthuſiaſm.

Another more general and powerful cauſe of obſcurity, may be found in the very nature of epiſtolary compoſition, leading the apoſtle to refer to paſt events, to perſonal and local circumſtances, and even to particular converſations, perfectly known to thoſe whom he addreſſed, and which he therefore ſpeaks of, and argues on, without entering into any ſuch particular explanation, as would be neceſſary to illuſtrate his language, and his reaſonings, to modern readers.

Thus the firſt epiſtle to the Corinthians is employed, partly in anſwering a letter received from them, containing various enquiries about certain points of

[5] This is acknowledged by Michaelis, ch. iv. §. 4. p. 119. The principal mode in which this obſcurity affects us, ſeems to be the uſe of Greek particles, with all the latitude of the correſponding particles in Hebrew; perhaps no commentator has laboured more ſucceſsfully to remove this obſcurity than Dr. M'Knight, in his fourth preliminary eſſay particularly, ſect. 4. and the ſupplement to this eſſay, in vol. iv.

opinion

opinion and conduct, as to which they had entreated the determination of the apoſtle; and partly in cenſuring certain diſſentions and ſingularities among them, which he had been acquainted with from public rumour or private information; in both the apoſtle purſues the method which the occaſion naturally required; he anſwers their different queries, without formally repeating the terms in which they were propoſed. "[t] Now concerning the things whereof ye "write unto me," is the only direct mention made of them; and he cenſures their miſconduct, without being anxious to detail minutely all the particulars in which it conſiſted, while both his determinations and his cenſures are blended with the various inſtructions and directions, which ſuggeſted themſelves to his mind on other points, without any expreſs notice being given of the tranſition. Now, who does not ſee that we would much more clearly perceive the exact connection and import of this epiſtle, if we had the letter of the Corinthians before us, or were acquainted, as fully as the apoſtle, with the circumſtances of their miſconduct? but ſurely our want of this information cannot be adduced to prove St. Paul was a myſtical and viſionary fanatic.

The ſecond epiſtle to the Corinthians is not leſs perſonal and local than the firſt—it every where refers to the effects which the firſt had wrought upon them, a particular account of which the apoſtle had

[t] 1 Corinth. vii. 1.

received

received from Titus. It pre-ſuppoſes a diviſion in the church of Corinth, which in general adhered to the apoſtle, while a faction remained that ſtill laboured to undermine his authority, and calumniate his character. The former party he encourages and ſupports, againſt the objections and miſrepreſentations of the latter he vindicates himſelf, rather however by advancing what his readers would themſelves apply to that purpoſe, than by expreſsly ſtating each calumny or miſrepreſentation, which he wiſhed to repel. Now, though ſuch an expreſs ſtatement might have made the epiſtle more clear to us, it would have undoubtedly been leſs dignified, and leſs natural, in the apoſtles' ſituation.

Thus alſo one of the moſt difficult paſſages in the entire New Teſtament, which occurs in the ſecond epiſtle to the Theſſalonians, chap. ii. evidently derives its obſcurity from a reference to a paſt converſation. The Theſſalonians ſeem to have miſtaken a paſſage in his firſt epiſtle for a prophecy, that the day of judgment was immediately to come—an error, productive of ſuch alarm and confuſion, the apoſtle is anxious to remove; he therefore tells them—"be ye not ſoon ſhaken in mind, or be troubled, "neither by ſpirit, nor by word, nor by letter, as "from us, that the day of Chriſt is at hand; let no "man deceive you by any means, for that day ſhall "not come, except there come a falling away firſt, "and that man of ſin be revealed, the ſon of perdi-

"tion,

" tion, who oppoſeth, and exalteth himſelf above all
" that is called God, or that is worſhipped, ſo that
" he, as God, ſitteth in the temple of God, ſhewing
" himſelf that he is a God. *Remember ye not that*
" *when I was yet with you I told you theſe things, and*
" *ye know what* [u] *now reſtraineth him*, in order to his
" being revealed in his own ſeaſon; for the myſtery
" of iniquity already worketh, until he, who now
" reſtraineth, be taken out of the way, and then
" ſhall that wicked one be revealed."

The apoſtle then proceeds to deſcribe the character of that man of ſin, in terms which the Theſſalonians would, probably, eaſily underſtand, from a recollection of the apoſtles' converſation; but which to us partakes of the obſcurity, ſo generally, and almoſt univerſally attending the language of prophecy. Now ſuch a reference to a paſt converſation was extremely natural; and if we adopt the opinion of thoſe commentators, who conceive the power to whom the apoſtle alludes, to have been the Roman emperors, which he hints *would be taken away*: motives of *prudence* may have operated to prevent St. Paul from repeating, in a public epiſtle, the purport of that converſation.

But I forbear to multiply inſtances of obſcurity, which may be accounted for from our ignorance of

[u] In the 6th and 7th verſes, I adopt the tranſlation of Macknight.

the

the nature of the apoſtles' ſituation and deſign, in his different epiſtles, without giving the leaſt room to ſuſpect that it aroſe from the diſtraction and incoherence of an enthuſiaſtic mind. That it may be *ſo* accounted for I quote with pleaſure, the authority of * Locke, who was ſurely no deſpicable judge of intellectual excellence.

" That St. Paul (ſays he) knew how to proſecute " his purpoſe with ſtrength of argument and cloſe " reaſoning, without incoherent ſallies, or the inter- " mixing of things foreign to his buſineſs, was evi- " dent to me, from ſeveral ſpeeches of his recorded " in the Acts; and it was hard to think, that a man " who could *talk* with ſo much conſiſtency, and " clearneſs of conviction, ſhould not be able to " *write* without confuſion, inextricable obſcurity, " and perpetual rambling. The force, order and " perſpicuity, of theſe diſcourſes, could not be de- " nied to be very viſible; how then came it that " the like was thought much wanting in his epiſtles? " and of this there appeared to me to be this plain " reaſon, the particularities of the hiſtory in which " theſe ſpeeches are inſerted, ſhew St. Paul's end in " ſpeaking, which being ſeen, caſt a light on the " whole, and ſhew the pertinancy of all that he " ſays; but his epiſtles not being ſo circumſtanced, " there being no concurring hiſtory that *plainly* de-

* Vid. Locke's preface to his commentary on St. Paul's epiſtles, vol. 3, of his works, p. 105.

" clares

" clares the diſpoſition St. Paul was in, what the " actions, expectations, or demands, of thoſe to " whom he wrote required him to ſpeak to, we are " no where told—all this, and a great deal more, " neceſſary to guide us into the true meaning of " the epiſtles, is to be learned from the epiſtles them- " ſelves, and to be gathered from thence with " ſtubborn attention, and more than common ap- " plication."

It may not, perhaps, be uſeleſs to my younger readers to obſerve, on this part of my ſubject, that the very circumſtances which contribute to this ſpecies of obſcurity in the epiſtles, form at the ſame time the ſtrongeſt internal proofs of the genuineneſs of theſe compoſitions, and of the truth of all the tranſactions on which the proof of Chriſtianity depends. Such a variety of references to particular times, and places, and perſons; and above all, appeals to individuals as to facts which they knew, and converſations they had heard; anſwers evidently given to letters that had been received, and enquiries that had been made; appeals and anſwers, ſuch as would be clear and intelligible, if we ſuppoſe the facts alluded to real, theſe letters to have been before the writer of the epiſtles, and theſe enquiries to have been made, but which could have no conceivable object or meaning otherwiſe. Such particulars never find place in the artful texture of forged and fictitious compoſitions; theſe always avoid unneceſſary references to circumſtances, which would only make their

detection

detection eaſy and certain; they deliver their doctrines unconnected with facts; they guard as much as poſſible againſt objection; they every where betray marks of reſerve and caution, of artifice and deſign; far different are the epiſtles of St. Paul, every line of them ſpeaks the language of a man intent [y] on preſent, real, urgent buſineſs, addreſſing others equally engaged in the ſame tranſactions, and anxious to influence, and to direct them in ſome particular mode of conduct. In a word, we ſee in the epiſtles of this great apoſtle nothing of the fictions of impoſture, nothing of viſions of fanaticiſm; every thing beſpeaks reality and truth.

Another cauſe of obſcurity peculiarly affecting St. Paul's epiſtles, ariſes from his dwelling ſo much more fully than any other writer of the New Teſtament (St. John, perhaps, only excepted) on the moſt exalted and abſtruſe doctrines of the Chriſtian

[y] I cannot gratify any reader, who wiſhes to ſee ingenuity and truth combined in defence of Chriſtianity, more than by referring him to Paley's Horæ Paulinæ, in which the genuineneſs of St. Paul's epiſtles is evinced, by comparing them with the Acts, and with each other. The *undeſigned coincidence* between the hiſtory in the Acts, and the alluſions in the epiſtles—the natural turn of the apoſtles' ſentiments and language, according to the ſituations in which he, and thoſe whom he addreſſed, were placed, ſeem to me to form ſo ſtrong a proof of the truth of the whole hiſtory of the firſt planting of Chriſtianity, as, if conſidered with attention and candour, ſcarce any incredulity could reſiſt.

ſcheme.

ſcheme. " It is St. Paul, [z] chiefly, who, in his " epiſtles, has explained the goſpel economy in its " full extent, has ſhewn its connection with the for- " mer diſpenſations, and hath defended it againſt the " objections by which infidels, both in antient and " modern times, have endeavoured to overthrow " it."

Now, if men do not forget their place in the ſcale of beings; if they will not ſuppoſe themſelves competent to decide on the whole plan of the divine economy in the moral world, without doubt or heſitation, though conſtant [a] experience proves to them, that they are able to judge but very partially, and imperfectly, of the divine economy in the phyſical world, which yet ſeems ſo much more conſtantly and obviouſly ſubmitted to their enquiries, they will ſee, that when the apoſtles and evangeliſts ſtate themſelves to have received a revelation from God, and appeal, in confirmation of this, to plain facts, to miracles and prophecies, and hiſtorical teſtimony, it is in the higheſt

[z] Vid. Macknight's firſt prelimenary eſſay in proof of this, vol. 1. p. 5 to 56.

[a] Vid. Butler's Analogy, part i. chap. vii. of the government of God, conſidered as a ſcheme imperfectly comprehended.—Part ii. chap. iii. of our incapacity of judging what were to be expected in a revelation, and the credibility, from analogy, that it muſt contain things liable to objection.—Chap. iv. of Chriſtianity, as a ſcheme imperfectly comprehended;—and chap. v.—viii. the particular ſyſtem of Chriſtianity, the appointment of a Mediator, and the redemption of the world by him.

degree

degree irrational to reject theſe proofs without examination, and to pronounce the promulgators of this ſuppoſed revelation wild enthuſiaſts, becauſe ſome parts of the ſyſtem they deliver, are found to be myſterious and obſcure.—The ſcheme which Chriſtianity preſents, embraces the whole extent of God's moral government, as it regards this world, commencing with its creation, and cloſing only with its diſſolution; it is even declared to be intimately connected with the diſplay of the divine attributes to all orders of intellectual beings,[b] "*ſuch things as angels deſire to look into.*" The author of it is repreſented as of a divine nature, and moſt exalted dignity, the Son of God, and judge of the world. The means it employs are various and awful; but its obvious practical tendency is to promote virtue and piety.—Shall we ſay all this is the mere dream of enthuſiaſm, becauſe we do not clearly comprehend the detail of all its parts?—Shall we neglect its poſitive proofs, which are perfectly level to our capacities, and judge raſhly of what they are obviouſly incompetent to decide on? Surely this is to invert that order of reaſoning, which on other ſubjects we find ourſelves obliged to obſerve; for in every thing elſe we begin with what is plain and certain, before we proceed to what is complex, doubtful and remote.

Men who thus proceed in their religious enquiries, well deſerve the rebuke pronounced againſt them by

[b] 1 Peter i. 12.

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the [c] celebrated Boyle, whoſe reſearches into nature ſerved, not to diminiſh, but to encreaſe his reverence for Chriſtianity. "As to ſome paſſages (ſays he) of "ſcripture which are really obſcure, ſince it is the "abſtruſeneſs of what is taught in them, which "makes them inevitably ſo, it is little leſs ſaucy, "upon ſuch a ſcore, to find fault with the ſtyle of "the ſcripture, than to do ſo with its author for "making us but men."

I conclude this part of my ſubject, by obſerving, that however various cauſes may contribute to caſt a partial ſhade over the Chriſtian revelation, they are very far from eclipſing the luſtre of its divine original, or intercepting that ſalutary light, by which it directs the ſteps, and brightens the proſpects of the human race. The facts on which its evidence is founded are remarkably free from obſcurity and doubt, and its leading doctrines are clear, as far as is neceſſary, to all who candidly and impartially improve the means of information they enjoy; the occaſional obſcurity of the ſcriptures does not render it difficult for the humbleſt Chriſtian to diſcover the principles and rules by which his moral conduct ſhould be regulated in this ſcene of trial, or prevent him from being fully aſſured, that life and immortality are brought to light by the goſpel; and that *faith*,

[c] Vid. Boyle's Eſſay on the ſtile of the holy ſcriptures; his anſwer to the objection from their obſcurity, § 5. vol. 2. p. 101, of the folio edition, in 5 vols. Lond. 1755.

an humble reliance on the veracity and the mercy of God, "*working by love*," by ſincere and cheerful obedience, from heartfelt gratitude and reverence to God, and active good will to man, is an eſſential condition of final acceptance.

And while the occaſional obſcurity of the ſcriptures does not prevent them from guiding the humble and illiterate Chriſtian in his way to heaven, we perceive that it may ſerve many important purpoſes in moral diſcipline; it excites the curioſity, and fixes the attention of the learned and inquiſitive, while it furniſhes an object of enquiry, that if rightly uſed, will, at once, exerciſe their underſtandings, and improve their hearts—to many who may, perhaps, by their happy ſituation, and their intellectual characters, be almoſt exempted from other material difficulties in their probation, it forms a trial of their candour, humility, and ſerious deſire to trace the Divine will.

That it alſo affords occaſions for diſputes and contention, for hereſy and ſchiſm, for heat and violence, ſurely is not inconſiſtent with the general tenor of God's moral government, in which every thing, as it is valuable when rightly employed, is capable of being proportionably perverted and abuſed: nor ſhould it be forgotten, that this very obſcurity of ſcripture affords the ſtrongeſt reaſon for that mutual forbearance and good will, amidſt diverſities of opinion, which crowns the Chriſtian

Chriſtian character, and forms the very bond of peace, and of all virtues. Surely beings, ſuch as we are, ignorant and fallible, ſhould never forget, that the more grounds there are for doubt and contrariety of opinion, the more obviouſly it is our duty to "receive thoſe that are weak in the faith, but not to "doubtful diſputations," and to cultivate that charity, without which he who liveth is dead before God.

SECTION II.

The warmth and earneſtneſs of St. Paul's epiſtles not imputable to enthuſiaſm.

FROM what has been hitherto adduced, it ſeems ſufficiently evident that the obſcurity, ſo much complained of in the epiſtles of St. Paul, ariſes in a great degree from the language which the apoſtle was led to uſe, as moſt natural to himſelf, and the generality of thoſe whom he addreſſed, and beſt adapted to the ſacred ſubjects which employed his pen; from the nature of epiſtolary compoſition abounding with alluſions, which, though clear to thoſe for whom they are immediately intended, are obſcure to readers of a diſtant country, and an age long ſubſequent; and from the incompetence of the

human faculties to comprehend, fully and diſtinctly, the whole extent, and the exalted and myſterious objects of the Chriſtian ſcheme.

It has been ſhewn that theſe various circumſtances, far from proving the apoſtle a wild and viſionary fanatic, tend to confirm the authenticity of his works, and the truth of his claims to a divine inſpiration.—But in addition to theſe circumſtances, the obſcurity of theſe epiſtles undoubtedly ariſes, in a great degree, from the warmth of the apoſtles' mind—from the rapidity of his thoughts—from his neglecting to point out exactly the connection and method of his diſcourſes, and to aſcertain the diſtinct object of every part.

Does it however neceſſarily follow that we muſt impute this warmth, this rapidity, this apparent neglect of regular method, to the violence and incoherence of enthuſiaſm? Surely to aſſert this would be to take the whole queſtion for granted.—Warmth and zeal are indeed natural conſequences of fanaticiſm; but they are not deciſive proofs of it, except they ariſe to a degree for which no other adequate cauſe can be aſſigned, or except their effects are abſurd and extravagant, inconſiſtent with reaſon, and therefore unworthy of God.

In order then to decide this queſtion, we muſt conſider what cauſes may have produced this warmth in the

the apoſtle, under the circumſtances in which he was placed, without ſupplying any juſt grounds for queſtioning his claim to a divine authority.

Now, in conſidering the probable cauſes of ſuch warmth it is evident, that if St. Paul was really directed by inſpiration to preach the goſpel, he could not but feel the great dignity and importance of the ſacred ſubjects which he treated of. Chriſtianity in every view of it was calculated to rouſe the warmeſt feelings of devout joy and gratitude, reverence and ſelf-abaſement, in every pious mind. The unparalleled virtue and benignity of its author, his ſupernatural wiſdom and power, his cruel ſufferings and death, his divine and myſterious nature, his aſcenſion and exaltation, the ſupremely important character he bore, and the final effects of his interpoſition as Redeemer and judge of the world—all theſe united formed ſuch an object, as no human mind could contemplate with coolneſs and indifference, when convinced of its reality, as we ſuppoſe the apoſtle to have been, by direct and irreſiſtable proofs.

Chriſtianity was not leſs calculated by its *doctrines* to rouſe ſimilar feelings; it decided all thoſe queſtions, and ſolved all thoſe doubts, which perplex and depreſs the ſoul of man, when looking forward to futurity; it aſſured him that he ſhould not remain in the darkneſs of the grave, but ſhould riſe with a new and incorruptible body to eternal exiſtence; that he

ſhould

ſhould, in the very next ſtage of his being, be judged by Chriſt Jeſus, and receive according to his uſe of the means of improvement afforded him in this preſent life. That though bound to perform the whole law of righteouſneſs, his weakneſs and his guilt were not without a remedy; that if he prayed for ſtrength and aſſiſtance, God would beſtow it; and if he repented, his judge would pardon; for he had died to redeem him.

But the Chriſtian was not called on merely to yield to this intereſting and awful ſyſtem of doctrines an inactive aſſent—his profeſſion required a total change of principles and conduct, a total renunciation of the crimes, as well as the prejudices and errors of his former life; he was called on to forſake the multiplied pollutions of idolatry, and worſhip the one true God; to live ſoberly, righteouſly, and godly in this life, looking for his reward to another world, where eternal happineſs or miſery would await him, according to the ſentence of that Jeſus, the certainty of whoſe exiſtence was frequently proved (eſpecially to St. Paul) by plain and uncontrouled miracles exhibited to his ſenſes, and even wrought upon himſelf.

With ſuch an impreſſion of the goſpel as this, was it natural, I might almoſt ſay was it poſſible, for the apoſtle to receive Chriſtianity, and to dedicate his life to preaching it, and yet regard it with coldneſs,

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teach it in calm and frigid language, and never betray any marks of zeal and earneſtneſs? ſurely not. So far then from conſidering the warmth of St. Paul as a deciſive proof of deluſion and fanaticiſm, we muſt admit it to have been the natural conſequence of the reality and truth of his divine miſſion: had no traces of ſuch zeal and warmth appeared, we could not but pronounce him inſincere and hypocritical.

The only cauſe of our heſitating a moment to admit this concluſion, is undoubtedly found in our proneneſs to judge concerning the feelings of the firſt teachers and believers of Chriſtianity, by the feelings of even the moſt ſincerely religious at the preſent day, which, it muſt be confeſſed, rarely exhibit ſuch warmth as animated St. Paul; but a moments reflection will expoſe the fallacy of ſuch reaſoning, and convince us that, removed as we are by a period of near one thouſand eight hundred years from the firſt origin of the goſpel, we may feel but very weakly the great importance of various circumſtances attending it, which could not but make a deep impreſſion on the primitive converts. Never having ourſelves witneſſed or joined the abſurd, impure, and bloody rites of idolatrous worſhip, we are not accuſtomed to receive with ſufficient gratitude that rational and ſimple religion, which teaches that God is a Spirit, and muſt be worſhipped in ſpirit and in truth. Never having laboured under the burthen of Jewiſh ceremonies, we feel but faintly the comforts

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of that law of liberty which the goſpel reveals. Never having felt the tormenting doubts and fears of thoſe, who ſhrink from death as the ſtroke of annihilation, or the commencement of miſery, we value not as we ought the gracious terms of forgiveneſs, and the hopes of a happy immortality, which our Redeemer and Lord holds out to every ſincere penitent.

Even the miracles of the goſpel affect us very faintly, in compariſon of the deep and awful impreſſion which they muſt have made on the apoſtles, and their firſt converts; with us they are the objects of reaſon and reflection; with them they were the object of ſenſe and ſight, the conſtant ſubject of aſtoniſhment and praiſe. Can we wonder then if the apoſtle ſpeaks of the goſpel, its evidence, its doctrines, and its effects, with a warmth and vehemence, which, however it may exceed the religious zeal which ſuch ſubjects now excite, is really no more than what their exalted nature, and their ſtupendous importance, deſerves? No—he only ſpeaks the language of nature and truth, when he deſcribes the change wrought in the conduct and hopes of himſelf, and every convert, by receiving the goſpel, in the moſt bold and glowing terms; when he calls it, paſſing from ſlavery to freedom, from ſin to righteouſneſs, from death to life, a total change of vital principles, even a new creation. Having eſtabliſhed the reſurrection of Chriſt by the fulleſt proofs, and thence

thence inferred the certainty of a general reſurrection, and the power of Chriſt to pardon the penitent, how natural and juſt that bold apoſtrophe—"[d] Oh! death "where is thy ſting! oh! grave where is thy "victory!" When reflecting on his own bigotted attachment to the Jewiſh law, in which he had ſo long prided himſelf, he is led to compare it with his preſent well-grounded faith in the goſpel, he exclaims not leſs juſtly than emphatically—"[e] but what "things were gain to me, thoſe I counted loſs for "Chriſt; yea, doubtleſs, and I count all things but "loſs for the excellency of the knowledge of Chriſt "Jeſus, my Lord, for whom I have ſuffered the loſs "of all things, and do count them but droſs, that I "may win Chriſt." When he has deſcribed the connection of the Chriſtian and Jewiſh diſpenſation, and ſhewn, that even the rejection of the Jews was a regular part of the divine economy for eſtabliſhing the evidence, and extending the bleſſings of the goſpel to all the world; how naturally, as well as eloquently, does he exclaim—"[f] Oh! the depth "of the riches both of the wiſdom and know-"ledge of God; how unſearchable are his judg-"ments, and his ways paſt finding out!"

The ſtrong language in which the apoſtle deſcribes the depravity and blindneſs of the Heathens, the glorious titles he applies to the Chriſtians, as

[d] 1 Cor. xv. 55. [e] Phil. iii. 7 and 8. [f] Rom. xi. 33.

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"the called,"—"the choſen,"—"the ſaints,"—"the "redeemed of God," muſt appear perfectly juſt and rational, when we conſider the real difference of character, opinions and hopes, between theſe two deſcriptions of men, and the divine interference from which that difference aroſe. Hence, we ſee how naturally the apoſtle commences his epiſtles, "eleven out of "thirteen of them, ſays a judicious writer, begin with "exclamations of joy, praiſe and thankſgiving; as "ſoon as he thought of a Chriſtian church planted "any where, and eſpecially by himſelf, there ſeems to "have a been a flow of moſt lively affection ac-"companying the idea, in which all ſenſibility of his "own temporal affections, and of theirs, was ſwal-"lowed up, and the fullneſs of his heart was com-"pelled to vent itſelf in ſuch chearful, exalted and "devout language;" and the ſame character prevails throughout all the epiſtles. Wherever he thinks of the mercy of God, in revealing the goſpel, of the bleſſings beſtowed by it, and the change it produces in men's principles and conduct, he is hurried away to an impetuous and exalted ſtrain of thought and expreſſion, which, if ſuperficially viewed, may appear the effect of enthuſiaſm; but when compared with the ſituation in which the apoſtle was placed, and the objects which engaged and filled his attention, evidently reſult from ſincerity and piety, and are perfectly conſiſtent with truth and ſoberneſs.

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Another natural and powerful cauſe of warmth and irregularity in St. Paul's writings, may be found in the *ſevere ſufferings* which he had himſelf ſuſtained, and was conſtantly expoſed to, for the goſpel, as well as in the perſecuted and diſtreſſed ſtate of the churches, and the individuals whom he addreſſed; the [g] recollection of paſt dangers, the proſpect of ſtill greater, perpetually threatening him and all his followers, could not but produce a degree of agitation and ſuſpence, of ſtrong hopes and anxious fears, totally inconſiſtent with that deliberate compoſure of mind, which attends the author who ſits and writes at eaſe. We may without heſitation pronounce, that ſtudied accuracy, a calm and guarded ſtile, regular tranſitions, and ſtrict method, would have been wholly incongruous and unnatural in ſuch a ſtate of feeling, as the apoſtle's muſt have been when he [h] wrote, [i] immediately after having with difficulty eſcaped violent death, or when he was in [k] bonds, chained to a ſoldier who kept him, and hourly expected to be dragged to trial, and perhaps condemned to crucifixion; when a [l] principal ſubject of his letters was to comfort thoſe to whom he wrote for the loſs of their deareſt friends, butchered by

[g] 1 Cor. iv. 9. 2 Cor. i. 4 to 10. 2 Cor. vi. 2 to 10. 2 Cor. vii. 5. 2 Cor. xi. 23—29.

[h] Coloſſ. i. 24.

[i] 2 Cor. i. 8 to 10.

[k] Epheſ. iv. 1. Acts xxviii. 16 and 30. vi. 20. 2 Tim. i. 15 and 16. and iii. 11. and iv. 16. Phil. i. 13 and 14—29 and 30.

[l] As in the epiſtle to the Theſſalonians, ch. iii. 4. iv. 13.

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the ſword of perſecution; to arm them with fortitude and perſeverance, in encountering and ſuſtaining ſuch dangers; to root out of their hearts hatred and revenge; and to plant in their ſtead forgiveneſs and pity, and kindneſs towards their enemies, and to enforce patience and tranquillity, ſubmiſſion and circumſpection, in the midſt of ſuch alarms. In letters written in ſuch a ſituation, and for ſuch a purpoſe, is it wonderful that we do not find words nicely ſelected, periods harmoniouſly rounded, and the connection of every part regularly laid down at the commencement of each letter, and ſtrictly adhered to in its progreſs? Surely to expect this were moſt unreaſonable; and therefore to impute the want of it to the violence and incoherence of fanaticiſm, is moſt uncandid and unjuſt.

A due conſideration of the feelings which the perſecuted ſtate of the apoſtle, and the whole Chriſtian church, would naturally excite, will not only account for the general want of poliſhed compoſition, and ſtrict order, in the epiſtles, but fully explain many of thoſe paſſages which ſeem moſt warm and extravagant. Hence we perceive the ſtrict propriety and truth of thoſe paſſages which aſſert, in the ſtrongeſt manner, the immediate ſupport of God in the miniſtry of the apoſtle, as well as of thoſe which deſcribe, with exultation, the triumph of Chriſtianity over the oppoſition it ſuſtained, and expreſs the fulleſt conviction that no oppoſition would

would finally prevail againſt it. Such feelings and ſuch conviction were the immediate and neceſſary conſequence of the apoſtles' having himſelf ſuſtained perſecution, and eſcaped death, by miraculous interference; of his finding that thoſe events which ſeemed to threaten immediate deſtruction to the church of Chriſt, were by an over-ruling Providence ſo directed, as to contribute to its extenſion and eſtabliſhment. Hence St. Paul, alluding to his eſcape from the tumult at Epheſus, ſays, "[m] we would "not, brethren, have you ignorant of the trouble "which came to us in Aſia; that we were preſſed "out of meaſure, above ſtrength, in ſo much that "we deſpaired even of life; but we had the ſen-"tence of death in ourſelves, that we ſhould not "truſt in ourſelves, but in God, which raiſed the "dead; who delivered us from ſo great a death, "and doth deliver—in whom we truſt that he will "yet deliver us." Hence alſo, contraſting the natural weakneſs of the apoſtles with the ſtrength which they derived from God, he deſcribes them all as "[n] unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and "behold we live; as chaſtened, and not killed; as "ſorrowful, yet alway rejoicing; as poor, yet "making many rich; as having nothing, yet poſ-"ſeſſing all things:" and in another paſſage, "as "[o] troubled on every ſide, yet not diſtreſſed; per-"plexed, but not in deſpair; perſecuted, but not

[m] 2 Cor. i. 8. [n] 2 Cor. vi. 9. [o] 2 Cor. iv. 8.

"forſaken;

" forſaken; caſt down, but not deſtroyed; always " bearing about, ſays he, in the body the dying of " the Lord Jeſus, that the life alſo of Jeſus might be " made manifeſt in our body; for we which live are " always delivered unto death for Jeſus's ſake, that " the life alſo of Jeſus might be made manifeſt in our " mortal fleſh"—and hence the apoſtle's full confidence in a final reward—" our light affliction, which " is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more " exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we " look not at the things which are ſeen, but at the " things which are not ſeen; for the things which " are ſeen are temporal, but the things which are " not ſeen are eternal."

The ſame experience which convinced the apoſtle of the divine interference, in ſupport of the preachers of Chriſtianity, under the ſevereſt perſecutions, and inſpired him with ſuch triumphant confidence, of obtaining preſent ſucceſs and final reward, led him alſo to dwell with complacency on the weakneſs of the mere human agents, and the inſufficiency of the merely natural means, which God employed as the inſtruments in this great work; hence he ſpeaks of wiſdom and learning as incompetent to diſcover religious truth, and overcome what he terms the fooliſhneſs of preaching; not that he in any degree meant to condemn the ſober uſe of reaſon, in examining the evidence of Chriſtianity, for this he frequently recommends—nor yet that he undervalued

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the aſſiſtance of induſtry and learning, in enforcing goſpel truths; for the whole tenor of his inſtructions to its miniſters is the very reverſe of this [p]; but that he knew that the original diſcovery of the Chriſtian ſcheme was not made out by human ingenuity, but by divine revelation; and that the firſt teachers who ſpread it, were qualified for the taſk, not by natural attainments, but by immediate aſſiſtance from the Spirit of God. To render this proof of the heavenly original of the goſpel clear and undeniable, divine wiſdom had ſelected moſt of the apoſtles from men endowed with only moderate talents, and moderate learning. St. Paul himſelf, though far ſuperior to the reſt in both, was yet fully conſcious he owed his own original converſion, and his ſucceſs in converting others, as compleatly to ſupernatural interference, as any one of his brethren; hence he diſclaims ſo ſtrongly the contrary ſuppoſition, and declares to the [q] Corinthians, that he came among them, not with the "enticing words of man's wiſdom, but with the "demonſtration of the Spirit, and of power, that "their faith ſhould ſtand, not in the wiſdom of "men, but in the power of God."

Hence he ſtates ſo frequently that the [r] Jewiſh doctors, by their vain traditions, and the Grecian philo-

[p] Phil. i. 9. Coloſſ. iv. 5, 6. Vid. 1 Tim. iv. 13. 2. Tim iii. 14 to 17. Titus ii. 7, 8.

[q] 1 Cor. ii. 1 to 5. [r] Vid. Rom. i. ii. and iii. chap.

ſophers

ſophers by their arrogant ſpeculations, had equally corrupted religious truth, and proved themſelves utterly unable to inſtruct and reform mankind; a work which remained to be executed by the humble followers of Chriſt, whom theſe pretenders to wiſdom rejected with diſdain, and oppoſed with virulence. With this clue, ſupplied by the plain facts of the goſpel hiſtory, we are enabled to interpret with clearneſs, and to reconcile to truth and common ſenſe, all thoſe paſſages which fanatics have interpreted, or rather perverted, as if they entirely interdicted the uſe of reaſon, and renounced the aid of learning in religion. The apoſtle means totally the reverſe of this; it was the vain and falſe traditions, gloſſes and corruptions of the Jewiſh doctors; the wild ſpeculations, the childiſh diſputes, the falſe and proud philoſophy of the Grecian ſophiſts, and the Aſiatic gnoſtics which he expoſed and condemned;—it was the inſufficiency of unaſſiſted reaſon, and the preſumptuous folly of rejecting divine inſtruction, which he perpetually laboured to expoſe; for this purpoſe it is, that he warns Timothy and Titus againſt thoſe fables and endleſs genealogies, which miniſtered only diſputes [s]; againſt "thoſe profane and vain babblings and [t] oppoſitions of ſcience, falſely ſo called, which cauſed "many to err from the faith."—Such only is the import of all paſſages, ſimilar to the following, which is, perhaps, the fulleſt on this ſubject.

[s] 1 Tim. i. 4. [t] 1 Tim. the two laſt verſes; vid. alſo, Titus iii. 9.

"Chriſt

" Chriſt ſent me, ([u]ſays the apoſtle) not to bap-
" tize, but to preach the goſpel; not with wiſdom
" of words, leſt the croſs of Chriſt ſhould be of
" none effect, for the preaching of the croſs is to
" them that periſh, fooliſhneſs; but to us who are
" ſaved, it is the power of God: for it is written, I
" will deſtroy the wiſdom of the wiſe, and will bring to
" nothing the underſtanding of the prudent. Where
" is the wiſe, where is the ſcribe, where is the diſ-
" puter of this world? Hath not God made fooliſh
" the wiſdom of the world? for after (in the wiſdom
" of God) the world, by its wiſdom, knew not God,
" it pleaſed God, by the fooliſhneſs of preaching, to
" ſave them that believe. For the Jews require a ſign,
" and the Greeks ſeek after wiſdom, but we preach
" Chriſt crucified—unto the Jews a ſtumbling block,
" and to the Greeks fooliſhneſs; but unto them
" which are called, both Jews and Greeks, the power
" of God, and the wiſdom of God: becauſe the
" fooliſhneſs of God is wiſer than men, and the
" weakneſs of God is ſtronger than men. For you
" ſee your calling, brethren, how that not many wiſe
" men after the fleſh, not many mighty, not many
" noble, [x] *have called you*: but God hath choſen the
" fooliſh things of the world to confound the wiſe;
" and the weak things of the world to confound the

[u] 1 Cor. i. 17.

[x] This important alteration in the tranſlation, I adopt from Dr. Macknight, who has, to my mind, fully evinced its propriety.

" mighty; and baſe things of the world, and things
" that are deſpiſed, hath he choſen; yea, and things
" that are not, to bring to nought things that are;
" that no fleſh ſhould glory in his preſence."

Bold and overſtrained as this paſſage might ſeem, when we do not attend to its occaſion and its context, it will, I think, appear founded on certain fact, and perfectly conſiſtent with reaſon, when we reflect on the ill ſucceſs of both Jews and Greeks in religious enquiries—on the violent oppoſition they made to Chriſtianity—on the natural weakneſs, and even ignorance of the firſt teachers of the goſpel—on their ſucceſs in overcoming the oppoſition of the Jewiſh Rabbies, and the Greek philoſophers, by the exhibition of plain and uncontrouled miracles, with the clear diſcovery they made of the undoubted, but neglected and forgotten truths of natural religion to mankind, as well as of the more peculiar doctrines of the Chriſtian ſcheme.

Perſecution from external enemies was not, however, the only ſource of embarraſſment to the apoſtle: the *oppoſition he encountered from miſtaken zealots, or falſe teachers*, even in the churches which he himſelf had planted, at the hazard of his life, was another ſubject of conſtant anxiety; and a great part of his epiſtles is occupied in expoſing and confuting the falſe doctrines which theſe, his opponents, had introduced; in vindicating his character from the miſrepreſenta-

tions

tions and calumnies with which they had loaded it; rebuking the miſconduct of thoſe whom they had ſeduced; commanding the infliction of public cenſure and puniſhment on the moſt groſs offenders; and threatening the obſtinate and contumacious with ſtill greater puniſhments, which he would himſelf inflict, by the miraculous and apoſtolical power with which he was inveſted.

Such topics as theſe, it would ſurely have been unnatural, nay, almoſt impoſſible to treat of, without a conſiderable degree of warmth and earneſtneſs. We cannot wonder at the apoſtle being obliged, frequently, to recall to the recollection of his converts his own preaching and miracles, his labours and his his ſufferings; at his appealing to them, with the greateſt earneſtneſs, in atteſtation of his integrity and affection towards them; at his urging and entreating them to adhere to that faith which he had taught; at his deſcribing the miſconduct and unworthy views of the falſe teachers, in the ſtrongeſt colours, and pointing out the dangers they incurred by following them, in the moſt forcible manner.

If the conviction the apoſtle entertained of the divine origin of the doctrines he inculcated was firm; if his ſenſe of their importance was exalted; if he was fully conſcious of having taught and acted with ſingleneſs of heart; if he conſidered the guilt of wilfully apoſtatizing from the truth in Chriſt as great

and hazardous, he could not but ſpeak freely, and boldly, and urgently, when oppoſed by error and calumny; when the intereſts of the goſpel, and the virtue and happineſs of thoſe churches, which were moſt dear to him, were at ſtake. Since then a ſincere teacher of divine truths, however ſober and genuine his inſpiration is ſuppoſed, muſt have entertained theſe feelings, and expreſſed them with freedom and earneſtneſs; ſurely ſuch feelings, and ſuch a mode of expreſſing them, is no proof of weakneſs and fanaticiſm.

In conſidering the effect which the general perſecuted ſtate of the church, as well as the perſonal oppoſition particularly offered to the apoſtles, muſt have produced in their feelings and writings, it is neceſſary to remark, that ſuch perſecution and oppoſition contribute materially to confirm the certainty of a divine interpoſition at the firſt promulgation of Chriſtianity; becauſe no human means exiſted to overpower ſuch perſecution, and no human artifice could have eſcaped detection, when into that very ſociety, which was formed, as infidels ſuppoſe, merely by ſuch artifice, diſcord and controverſy ſo early crept, inducing ſome of its chief leaders to oppoſe and queſtion each others opinions and pretenſions; a conteſt which, if theſe claims had not, on the part of the apoſtle, been founded on truth, would undoubtedly have expoſed the fallacy by which they were ſupported. It is alſo neceſſary further to remark,

that

that the ſame circumſtances give the adverſary to Chriſtianity every advantage he could deſire, for detecting enthuſiaſm in the writings and conduct of its firſt teachers, if it had really exiſted; becauſe external perſecution, and internal controverſy, were, of all imaginable circumſtances, the moſt directly calculated to rouſe, and to inflame the ſmalleſt ſparks of enthuſiaſm into extravagance and violence. If then, notwithſtanding this powerful bias, we diſcover in the writings of the apoſtles clear traces of ſound judgment and ſteady ſelf-command, we may without heſitation conclude, that the ſobriety, as well as the ſincerity of their mind, has ſuſtained the ſevereſt trial, and been eſtabliſhed by the fulleſt proof.

This concluſion applies with peculiar force to the writings of St. Paul; becauſe his natural temper was certainly warm, his train of ideas rapid, his turn of ſtyle bold and emphatic, and his education ſuch as was calculated to ſtrengthen his impreſſion of the importance of religion. A mind ſuch as this, controuled and directed by a ſuperintending inſpiration, was an admirable inſtrument for the laborious taſk of ſpreading the goſpel through the wide extent of the Heathen world, in deſpite of all oppoſition; but ſuch a mind uncontrouled, and undirected by the Spirit of God, if once infected by enthuſiaſm, would have exhibited it in all its extravagance, eſpecially when agitated and irritated by ſuch malignant perſecution

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from open enemies, and inſidious oppoſition from falſe friends, as he emphatically deſcribes in the paſſage, in which he compares his own claims to the gratitude and confidence of the Corinthians with thoſe which the falſe teachers who oppoſed him advanced—" [y] wherein ſoever any is bold, I am bold " alſo. Are they Hebrews? ſo am I; are they " Iſraelites? ſo am I; are they the ſeed of Abraham? " ſo am I; are they miniſters of Chriſt? (I ſpeak as a " fool.") [I am conſcious of the apparent impropriety of boaſting of myſelf to which I am driven.] " I am more—in labours more abundant, in ſtripes " above meaſure, in priſons more frequent, in " deaths oft. Of the Jews five times received I " forty ſtripes, ſave one. Thrice was I beaten " with rods, once was I ſtoned, thrice I ſuffered " ſhip-wreck; a night and a day I have been in the " deep; in journeying often, in perils of waters, in " perils of robbers, in perils by mine own country- " men, in perils by the Heathen, in perils in the " city, in perils in the wilderneſs, in perils in the " ſea, in perils among falſe brethren; in wearineſs " and painfulneſs, in watchings often, in hunger " and thirſt, in faſtings often, in cold and na- " kedneſs. Beſides thoſe things that are without, " that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all " the churches. Who is weak, and I am not weak? " who is offended, and I burn not?"—Under ſuch

[y] 2 Co. xi. 21 to 29.

circumſtances

circumſtances as theſe, operating on a mind of ſuch quick ſenſibility as St. Paul's, we cannot wonder at his warmth and vehemence; but as all theſe circumſtances were calculated to call forth, and inflame the ſpirit of fanaticiſm, had it at all exiſted in the apoſtle, we muſt allow that his ſobriety of mind was ſubmitted to the moſt ſevere and deciſive trial, which the moſt ſcrutinizing adverſary can deſire. Under ſuch circumſtances, it was not poſſible but that his epiſtles ſhould have exhibited traces of vehemence and ſelf-commendation, and ſometimes even of warm reſentment, which prejudiced and worldly readers, who regard all religion with indifference, and treat every thing like religious controverſy with contempt, would readily pronounce enthuſiaſtic. But they ought not to be thus ſtigmatized, till it be conſidered whether this vehemence and ſelf-commendation, and indignant warmth, occaſioned by groſs injuries and calumnies, ever hurried the apoſtle to tranſgreſs the bounds of reaſon and propriety; or whether they were not ſoftened and controuled by ſuch tenderneſs, humility, and watchful attention to the peace and improvement of the Chriſtian church, as was every way worthy of an inſpired apoſtle, teaching the word of truth, and purſuing no other object than the intereſts of religion. That the zeal of the apoſtle was thus directed and controuled, it ſhall be the ſubject of the next ſection, by direct arguments, to evince.

SECTION

SECTION III.

St. Paul's Epiſtles exhibit ſuch marks of ſober judgment, and even of refined addreſs, as are directly contrary to the ſpirit of enthuſiaſm.

THE firſt character which I ſhall take notice of, as diſtinguiſhing St. Paul's writings from the compoſitions of weak and extravagant fanatics, is the ſtrict attention to propriety, and even the refined addreſs which he diſplays in adapting his epiſtles to the ſituations and tempers of the different churches, and individuals, for whom he deſigned them, as well as the relations which he bore to them, and the degree of authority which he might reaſonably exerciſe amongſt them: a few inſtances of this will ſhew how plainly clear reaſon and ſober judgment manifeſt themſelves in the writings of the apoſtle.

The important queſtion, whether the converts to Chriſtianity were obliged to obſerve the Jewiſh law, was that which moſt engaged the attention, and moſt frequently diſturbed the repoſe of the Gentile churches; its diſcuſſion therefore occupies a great part of the epiſtles of St. Paul, who was pre-eminently the apoſtle of the Gentiles; it forms the chief ſubject of the epiſtles to the churches of Rome

and

and Galatia, and is occaſionally mentioned in the epiſtles to Epheſus, Philippi, and Coloſſi; but in each, it is treated of exactly in that manner, which the ſituation of each church, and its peculiar connection with the apoſtle, required. The church at Rome he had not himſelf planted, nor, as it ſeems, [z] ever viſited previous to the writing this epiſtle, and the tenor of it is exactly ſuited to this ſituation; he commences his letter with aſſuring them of his earneſt deſire to viſit them—"for I long, ſays he, to "ſee you, that I may impart to you ſome ſpiritual "gift, to the end you may be eſtabliſhed;" but leſt he ſhould offend them by ſeeming to doubt of their being eſtabliſhed in the faith, with a cautious modeſty, well adapted to conciliate men yet ſtrangers to his perſon, he immediately explains, or [a] recalls, as it were, what he had ſaid, and ſtates the end of his coming to them to be their mutual rejoicing in one another's faith, when he and they came to ſee and know one another; "that is, that I may be comfort-"ed together with you, by the mutual faith both of "you and me." The ſame ſpirit of mildneſs and humble perſuaſion univerſally prevails in this epiſtle; we every where perceive, that though the apoſtle ſteadily maintains his own authority, as an inſpired teacher, yet he is not [b] ſatisfied with reſting his deciſions on this authority alone, he ſupports them by

[z] Vid. Rom. i. 11 and 15.
[a] Vid. Locke's note on Rom. i. 12.
[b] Vid. Paley's Horæ Paulinæ, ch. i. No. 7 and 8.

appealing

appealing to facts of univerſal notoriety, by adducing the authority of the Jewiſh ſcriptures, and by a cloſe and laboured train of argument. We alſo perceive, that as he had not himſelf planted the church in Rome, and might not therefore be certain of their being inſtructed in the Chriſtian ſcheme; he takes care to [c] weave into his diſcourſe the principal doctrines of the goſpel, and to give to thoſe whom he addreſſed, a comprehenſive view of the whole ſeries of God's diſpenſations to man on the ſubject of religion.

The epiſtle to the Galatians was written nearly on the ſame occaſion as that to the Romans; but as the apoſtle's connection with them was different, he has addreſſed them in a different manner. He had [d] himſelf introduced the goſpel amongſt them, he was therefore certain of their being fully informed in the general doctrines of Chriſtianity; hence he omits thoſe inſtructions which he judged neceſſary for the Romans, and confines himſelf to the ſingle point of convincing them of their error, in departing from the doctrines he had taught, ſo as to allow the neceſſity of obſerving the Jewiſh law; and as they had thus corrupted the truth, in which St. Paul himſelf had inſtructed them with the moſt affectionate zeal, and which he had confirmed by ſuch miracles, as had eſtabliſhed his divine authority amongſt them be-

[c] Vid. Locke's Synopſis, prefixed to this epiſtle.
[d] Gal. i. 6.

yond

yond diſpute, the apoſtle treats them with great freedom and plainneſs.—In the beginning of the epiſtle, having aſſerted, in the ſtrongeſt terms, that "his "apoſtleſhip[e] was not of man, neither by men, but "by Jeſus Chriſt, and God the Father, who had "raiſed him from the dead; he adds—I marvel "that ye are ſo ſoon removed from him that called "you, to another goſpel; and afterwards—but "though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any "other goſpel unto you than that which we have "preached unto you, let him be accurſed." In confirmation of his authority, he relates the hiſtory of his conduct ſince his converſion, in order to ſhew how entirely independent he was of any human teacher, even of the very chief of the apoſtles.

He appeals to his working miracles among them, and imparting ſpiritual gifts—"[f] he, therefore, that "miniſtereth the ſpirit to you, and worketh miracles "among you, doth he it by the works of the law, or "by the hearing of faith."—He addreſſes them ſometimes with the utmoſt plainneſs—"[g] oh! fooliſh Ga-"latians, who hath bewitched you, that you ſhould "not obey the truth!" Sometimes, with the warmeſt tenderneſs, bearing witneſs of their mutual affection, at the moment he expoſtulates with them moſt boldly, after recalling to their memory his firſt preaching among them, and ſome infirmities which attended his

[e] Gal. i. 1. [f] Gal. iii. 5. [g] Gal. iii. 1.

preaching,

preaching, but which yet they had not deſpiſed or rejected, he adds—" [h] for I bear you record, that if " poſſible you would have plucked out your own " eyes and have given them to me; am I therefore " become your enemy becauſe I tell you the truth?" and in the next ſentence he addreſſes them in this endearing language—" my little children, of whom " I travail in birth again, until Chriſt be formed in " you, I deſire to be preſent with you now, and to " change my voice, for I ſtand in doubt of you." Thus admirably does the apoſtle adapt his manner to the relation he bore his Gallatian converts, as their firſt teacher in Chriſt; and while he expoſtulates with them in the ſtile of warm complaint, and acknowledged ſuperiority, and reſts his deciſion of the queſtions he diſcuſſes principally on his own authority, he yet never forgets the intimate connection he had formed with them, or the feelings which it had produced, but ſoftens the tone of command with the tenderneſs of affection, and a grateful acknowledgement of their filial regard.

The epiſtles to the churches of Epheſus, Philippi, and Coloſſi, were evidently written nearly at the ſame time, and under the ſame circumſtances. The apoſtle impriſoned at Rome, fearful leaſt during his abſence vicious practices, or erroneous doctrines, ſhould creep into theſe churches, and particularly

[h] Gal. iv. 15. iv. 19.

apprehenſive

apprehenſive leſt the Judaizing teachers ſhould take this opportunity of intruding their hereſy, writes to encourage theſe ſocieties in their adherence to the true faith; but as here there was no occaſion to cenſure any paſt irregularity of conduct, as amongſt the Corinthians, or any poſitive deviation from the goſpel as amongſt the Galatians, we find the turn of theſe epiſtles different; having heard of the Epheſians ſtanding firm in the faith, he writes to confirm them in this reſolution, thanks God for them, and ſetting forth the gracious deſign of God in the ſcheme of redemption, prays that they may be enlightened in this ſcheme, and diſplays the glorious ſtate of the Chriſtian kingdom, not in the ordinary way of argument, for the firm conviction of the Epheſians rendered this unneceſſary, but couches what he wiſhes to drop into their minds in thankſgivings and prayers, with an [1] unuſual freedom, and ſublimity both of thought and expreſſion.

The epiſtle to the Coloſſians is written evidently in the ſame ſtrain as that to the Epheſians; but the epiſtle to the Philippians, though certainly written at the ſame time, and when the feelings of the apoſtle were in other reſpects the ſame, yet it is ſtrongly marked by the ſpirit of perſonal intereſt, and ardent affection, ſuited to the cloſe connection

[1] Vid. Locke's Synopſis, and Macknight's Preface to the Epheſians.

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the apoſtle maintained with his Philippian converts, from whom [k] alone, of all the neighbouring churches, he condeſcended to receive pecuniary aſſiſtance in his wants. From ſuch full confidence in their regard for him, and tender anxiety for their ſpiritual welfare, we find St. Paul warns them againſt the arts of the Judaizing teachers, in more free, ſtrong and pointed terms than any other church. "Beware of "dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the con-"ciſion;" and he alſo reſts the deciſion of the queſtion more directly on his own authority. "[l] Be ye "followers together of me, and walk ſo, as ye have "us for an example."—It ſeems however not unworthy of remark, that he does not here adduce any facts or arguments to eſtabliſh his apoſtleſhip, or increaſe the reverence which the Philippians already entertained for him, as he judged it neceſſary to do with the Galatians; he rather ſeems anxious to *prevent* theſe favourite converts from ſuppoſing that he offered himſelf as a '*perfect example*;' for when he thus points himſelf out as the guide whom they ſhould follow, he alſo takes care to inculcate on them that he himſelf was yet in a ſtate of trial and of progreſs, not of compleat ſecurity or full perfection; "[m] not "as one who had already attained, or was already "perfect; but as one who muſt ſtill preſs forward to "the mark of the prize of the high calling of God "in Chriſt Jeſus."—Now ſurely ſuch ſentiments as

[k] Phil. iv. 15. [l] Phil. iii. 15. [m] Phil. iii. 12.

theſe

theſe are very remote from the arrogance of fanaticiſm.

The epiſtle to Philemon has long been admired for its tenderneſs, delicacy and addreſs, and ſeems ſo irreconcileable with the ſtyle and temper of a diſordered fanatic, that Dr. Benſon, an eminently judicious commentator, has advanced it as ſufficient, even taken ſingly, to prove that its author was no enthuſiaſt. He is interceding with Philemon, a man it ſeems of ſome rank and opulence, to receive and to pardon Oneſimus, a ſlave, who appears to have eloped from his ſervice, and afterwards being converted to Chriſtianity by St. Paul, to have reſolved on atoning for his offence, by again ſubmitting himſelf to his maſter's power, and returning to his former ſervitude. On this occaſion how admirably does St. Paul unite the character of the authoritative teacher with that of the warm, yet unaſſuming, interceſſor; he addreſſes Philemon as his "*dearly beloved*," his *fellow labourer*, whoſe faith towards Chriſt, and benevolence towards the ſaints, was the ſubject of his conſtant thanks to God; and he proceeds—"though "I might be much bold in Chriſt to enjoin thee "that which is convenient; yet for love's ſake, I ra- "ther beſeech thee, being ſuch a one as Paul, the "aged, and now alſo a priſoner of Jeſus Chriſt, I "beſeech thee for my ſon Oneſimus, whom I have "begotten in my bonds, which in time paſt was "to thee unprofitable, but now profitable both to

"thee

" thee and to me, whom I have ſent again: thou
" therefore receive him that is mine own bowels,
" whom I would have retained with me, that in thy
" ſtead he might have miniſtered unto me in the
" bonds of the goſpel; but without thy mind would
" I do nothing, that thy benefit ſhould not be as it
" were of neceſſity, but willingly; for perhaps he
" therefore departed for a ſeaſon, that thou ſhouldeſt
" receive him for ever; not now as a ſervant, but
" above a ſervant—a brother beloved, eſpecially to
" me, but how much more unto thee, both in the
" fleſh, and in the Lord. If thou count me there-
" fore a partner, receive him as myſelf. If he hath
" wronged thee, or oweth thee ought, put that on
" mine account, I, Paul, have written it with mine
" own hand, I will repay it; albeit, I do not ſay to
" thee how thou oweſt unto me even thine ownſelf
" beſides; yea, brother, let me have joy of thee in
" the Lord: refreſh my bowels in the Lord: having
" confidence in thy obedience, I wrote unto thee,
" knowing that thou wilt alſo do more than I ſay."

In this beautiful paſſage we have the greateſt variety of arguments, and motives of the ſtrongeſt kind, couched in terms the moſt ſoft and perſuaſive. On the one hand, we have Philemon's reputation for gooodneſs, the reſpect due to his own character, his friendſhip for St. Paul, the reverence claimed by the apoſtle's age, the compaſſion due to his bonds; on the other, we have Oneſimus's repentance and

return

return to virtue—his converſion to the Chriſtian religion, and conſequent claim on Philemon's piety, as his ſpiritual brother—his faithful ſervices to St. Paul —the tender intereſt the apoſtle took in his concerns —a promiſe of reſtitution for any pecuniary loſs, accompanied with an inſinuation, that Philemon was indebted to the apoſtle for what was much more than the pardon of his repentant ſlave, even his own exiſtence as a Chriſtian, the forgiveneſs of his ſins, and his admiſſion into the kingdom of heaven. But the interceſſor inſiſts not on his authority as an apoſtle, or his claims to Philemon's gratitude; he ſubmits all to his free generoſity; and cloſes with a declaration of his full confidence, that under the influence of that, Philemon would do more than he himſelf thought it neceſſary to deſire. Can there be a doubt, whether ſuch an addreſs proceeded from a fanatic, weak and extravagant, claiming a ſpiritual authority which had no other foundation than his own ſpiritual arrogance, and exerciſing this authority, as ſuch a temper muſt have exerciſed it, indiſcriminately and violently, unreaſonably and miſchievouſly? or whether this epiſtle was not rather the effuſion of a mind replete with good ſenſe, verſed in the knowledge of the human heart, animated with the beſt and tendereſt feelings, but whoſe every feeling was regulated by the cleareſt reaſon, claiming no authority to which there was not the moſt indiſputable title, and exerciſing that authority with the ſoundeſt diſcretion.

The ſame total freedom from the unreaſonableneſs

and the violence of fanaticiſm, which we have ſeen in the general plan of St. Paul's epiſtles, is conſpicuous in the ſingular benevolence and addreſs, by which he renders his tranſitions to an ungrateful ſubject, as little offenſive as poſſible, particularly towards his countrymen, the Jews, whoſe obſtinate prejudices, and inveterate oppoſition, perpetually filled him with the deepeſt anxiety, and expoſed him to the greateſt dangers.

Inſtances of this are ſo frequent, that to tranſcribe them all would be to form almoſt a continued comment on ſeveral of the epiſtles—a few, which may be moſt eaſily ſeen when ſeparated from the context, will illuſtrate and eſtabliſh the argument; and here I adopt and tranſcribe, with pleaſure, ſome of thoſe paſſages which have been ſelected by one of the [n] ableſt critics, who has directed his attention to this part of the ſacred ſcriptures.

"The Jews, we know, were very numerous at "Rome, and probably formed a principal part among "the new converts; ſo much ſo, that the Chriſtians "ſeem to have been known at Rome, rather as a "denomination of Jews than any thing elſe. In an "epiſtle conſequently, to the Roman believers, the "point to be endeavoured after by St. Paul was, "to reconcile the Jewiſh converts to the opinion,

[n] Archdeacon Paley, in his Horæ Paulinæ, ch. ii. no. 8. § 2. Dublin edit. p. 61.

"that

" that the Gentiles were admitted by God to a pa-
" rity of religious ſituation with themſelves, and that,
" without being bound by the law of Moſes. The
" Gentile converts would probably accede to this
" opinion very readily. In this epiſtle, therefore,
" though directed to the Roman church in general,
" it is, in truth, a Jew writing to Jews. Accord-
" ingly you will take notice, that as often as his ar-
" gument leads him to ſay any thing derogatory from
" the Jewiſh inſtitution, he conſtantly follows it by
" a ſoftening clauſe. Having (ii. 28, 29.) pro-
" nounced, not much, perhaps, to the ſatisfaction of
" the native Jews, " *that he is not a Jew which is*
" *one outwardly, neither that circumciſion which is out-*
" *ward in the fleſh*;" he adds immediately, " *what*
" *advantage then hath the Jew, or what profit is there*
" *in circumciſion? much every way.* Having in the
" third chapter, ver. 28, brought his argument to
" this formal concluſion, " *that a man is juſtified by*
" *faith without the deeds of the law*;" he preſently
" ſubjoins, ver. 31, " do we then make void the
" law through faith? God forbid; yea, we eſtabliſh
" the law." In the ſeventh chapter, when, in the
" ſixth verſe, he had advanced the bold aſſertion,
" *that now we are delivered from the law, that being*
" *dead wherein we were held*; in the very next verſe
" he comes in with this healing queſtion, " *what*
" *ſhall we ſay then? is the law ſin? God forbid; nay,*
" *I had not known ſin but by the law.* Having in the
" following words inſinuated, or rather more than

 " inſinuated,

" insinuated, the inefficacy of the Jewish law, viii. 3.
" *for what the law could not do, in that it was weak*
" *through the flesh, God sending his own son, in the*
" *likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in*
" *the flesh*;" after a digression indeed, but that sort
" of digression which he could never resist, a raptu-
" rous contemplation of his Christian hope, and
" which occupies the latter part of this chapter, we
" find him in the next, as if sensible that he had
" said something that would give offence, returning
" to his Jewish brethren, in terms of the warmest
" affection and respect—" *I say the truth in Christ*
" *Jesus; I lie not; my conscience also bearing me wit-*
" *ness in the Holy Ghost, that I have great heaviness*
" *and continual sorrow in my heart; for I could wish*
" *that I myself were accursed from Christ, for my*
" *brethren, my kinsmen, according to the flesh, who*
" *are Israelites, to whom pertaineth the adoption, and*
" *the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the*
" *law, and the service of God, and the promises, whose*
" *are the fathers*, and of *whom, as concerning the*
" *flesh, Christ came.*" When in the thirty-first and
" thirty-second verses of this ninth chapter, he re-
" presented to the Jews, the error of even the best
" of their nation, by telling them, that " *Israel,*
" *which followed after the law of righteousness, had*
" *not attained to the law of righteousness, because*
" *they sought it not by faith, but as it were, by the*
" *works of the law, for they stumbled at that stumbling*
" *stone*;" he takes care to annex to his declaration

" these

" theſe conciliating expreſſions: " brethren, my " heart's deſire and prayer to God for Iſrael is, that " they might be ſaved; for *I bear them record, that* " *they have a zeal of God, but not according to know-* " *ledge.*" Laſtly, having, ch. x. ver. 20, 21. by " the application of a paſſage in Iſaiah, inſinuated " the moſt ungrateful of all propoſitions to a Jewiſh " ear, the rejection of the Jewiſh nation as God's " peculiar people, he haſtens, as it were, to qualify " the intelligence of their fall by this intereſting ex- " poſtulation, " *I ſay then, hath God caſt away his* " *people (i. e. wholly and entirely)? God forbid; for* " *I alſo am an Iſraelite, of the ſeed of Abraham, of* " *the tribe of Benjamin. God hath not caſt away his* " *people which he foreknew;*" and follows this thought " throughout the whole of the eleventh chapter, in " a ſeries of reflections, calculated to ſooth the Jew- " iſh converts, as well as to procure from their Gen- " tile brethren reſpect to the Jewiſh inſtitution. Now " all this is perfectly natural. In a real St. Paul, " writing to real converts, it is what anxiety to bring " them over to his perſuaſion would naturally pro- " duce; but there is an earneſtneſs and a perſonal- " ity, if I may ſo call it, in the manner, which a " cold forgery, I apprehend, would neither have " conceived nor ſupported."

Thus far this excellent writer; and undoubtedly theſe inſtances ſtrongly confirm his concluſion; but I may add, they more ſtrongly confirm the concluſion

ſion I am labouring to ſupport; for ſuch inſtances of heartfelt affection, for thoſe whoſe opinions he moſt ſtrongly oppoſes—and anxious care to ſoften and guard every thought, and every expreſſion, ſo as, if poſſible, not to offend, is unexampled in the writings of any man infected with the weakneſs, the violence, and the pride, ſo conſtantly attendant on fanaticiſm.

Another, not leſs ſtriking inſtance of St. Paul's mildneſs and tenderneſs, preſents itſelf in the apoſtle's language to the Corinthians, amongſt whom he had diſcovered the moſt atrocious [o] inceſt had been committed, and allowed to continue with impunity. On ſuch an occaſion a violent enthuſiaſt would have inſtantly thundered forth a ban of eternal condemnation, certainly againſt the individual offender, probably againſt the whole ſociety; no expreſſions would have ſeemed too bitter, no violence too great. Not ſo the apoſtle; he expoſes in ſtrong, but calm and dignified language, the enormity of the crime, the contagion of the example, and the danger of impunity. He commands them "[p] to put away from "among themſelves that wicked perſon—to deliver "him over [q] to Satan for the deſtruction of the

[o] 1 Cor. v. 1. [p] 1 Cor. v. 5.

[q] Vid. Benſon's hiſtory of the firſt planting of Chriſtianity, vol. i. p. 53. and the notes in Dodd and Macknight. Probably, this means, deliver him over by a ſentence of excommunication, to the puniſhment which ſhall be in conſequence miraculouſly inflicted on him, by a bodily diſeaſe.

"fleſh,

" fleſh, that the ſpirit may be ſaved in the day of " the Lord Jeſus."—But when his exhortation had produced the deſired effect, when the ſinner had been puniſhed, and reduced to a due ſenſe of ſhame and ſorrow for his enormous crime, and when the authority of virtue, and the ſacredneſs of religion had been thus reſtored, with what inimitable tenderneſs does the apoſtle ſpeak pardon and peace to the penitent offender, and conſolation to the humbled church?—" [r] Out of much affliction and anguiſh of " heart I wrote unto you, with many tears, not that " you ſhould be grieved, but that you might know " the love which I have more abundantly unto you. " If any have cauſed grief, he hath not grieved me " but in part (that I may not overcharge you all); " ſufficient to ſuch a man is this puniſhment, which " was inflicted of many; ſo that, contrarywiſe, ye " ought rather to forgive him, and comfort him, " leaſt, perhaps, ſuch a one ſhould be ſwallowed up " with overmuch ſorrow: wherefore, I beſeech you, " that you would confirm your love towards him."

The ſame epiſtle to the Corinthians exhibits St. Paul, treating another ſubject of the moſt trying and delicate nature, with the moſt conſummate judgment and addreſs, as well as the moſt perfect compoſure, and the moſt unfeigned humility.

One or more teachers had, in the abſence of the

[r] 2 Cor. ii.

apoſtle,

apoſtle, intruded into the Corinthian church, who laboured to undermine his character, to ſubvert his authority, and eſtabliſh their own influence on the ruins of both: with ſuch opponents, how would a wild enthuſiaſt have combated? doubtleſs with virulent, undiſguiſed, and unbounded condemnation, unqualified ſelf-applauſe; and above all, by denouncing againſt them, the immediate and irreconcileable vengeance of an offended God. Or, if we ſuppoſe him to have united with the heat of enthuſiaſm, any thing of the artifice and the fraud of impoſture, this would betray itſelf in cunning attempts to reconcile his adverſaries, by compromiſe and conceſſion, or to oppoſe calumny by calumny, and falſhood by falſhood; while attention to order and piety would be affected, merely to maſk pride and avarice, contending for authority united with emolument. Totally different from either of theſe is the ſpirit which pervades the writings of the apoſtle. He mentions his rivals and opponents only in general terms, not naming them individually, leſt he ſhould ſeem to be actuated by perſonal enmity, or to wiſh to excite againſt them perſonal oppoſition. He reprehends the ſpirit of contention and party amongſt the Corinthians, not becauſe it led them to revere an authothority *different from his own*, but becauſe it led them to follow *any human* authority, to a degree inconſiſtent with the reverence due to their common Lord and Saviour Jeſus Chriſt; and he exemplifies the unreaſonableneſs and impiety of ſuch miſplaced reverence,

verence, on the ſuppoſition of its being paid, not to another, but to himſelf, and ſuch of his brother apoſtles, as he moſt eſteemed; [s] " for, (ſays he) " while one ſaith, I am of Paul, and another, I am of " Apollos, are ye not all carnal? Who then is Paul, " and who is Apollos, but miniſters by whom ye be- " lieved, even as the Lord gave to every man? I " have planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the " increaſe; ſo then, neither is he that planteth any " thing, neither he that watereth, but God, who " giveth the increaſe."

In the very ſame ſpirit of heartfelt piety, and unfeigned humility, does he teach the Corinthians the juſt degree of eſtimation, in which they ſhould hold him, and every other miniſter of the goſpel; and the principle which bound them to ſuſpend all raſh judgment on their character and views, and all contention about their pretenſions and authority.—" [t] Let a " man ſo account of us as of the miniſters of Chriſt, " and ſtewards of the myſteries of God. Moreover, " it is required in ſtewards, that a man be found " faithful; but with me it is a very ſmall thing, that " I ſhould be judged of you, or of man's judgment; " yea, I judge not mine own ſelf, for I know no- " thing by myſelf, yet am I not hereby juſtified; " but he that judgeth me is the Lord. Therefore " judge nothing before the time, until the Lord

[s] 1 Cor. iii. 4 to 7. [t] 1 Cor. iv. chap. 7 firſt verſes.

" come,

" come, who both will bring to light the hidden " things of darkneſs, and will make manifeſt the " counſels of the heart; and then ſhall every man have praiſe of God;"—and theſe things, brethren, I " have in a *figure transferred to myſelf, and to Apollos* " *for your ſakes*, that ye might learn in us, not to " think of men, above that which is written, that " no one of you be puffed up for one againſt ano- " ther."—The reaſoning the apoſtle adduces, to prove the folly of ſuch arrogant claims on the part of the teacher, and ſuch exceſſive reverence on the part of the diſciple, is exactly the reverſe of that which enthuſiaſm uniformly employs. The enthuſiaſt aſſerts his divine miſſion, and conceives himſelf in conſequence exalted above every other human being, and entitled to the profoundeſt reverence; the apoſtle maintains that, becauſe the teachers of the goſpel were ſelected by the free choice of God, and enabled to obtain ſucceſs ſolely by the divine Power; therefore they had no right to value themſelves on this ſelection, or this ſucceſs, ſince both were to be aſcribed, not to their own merit, or their own exertion, but ſolely to the will and the power of God.

" Who maketh thee (ſays he) to differ from ano- " ther? and what haſt thou that thou didſt not receive? " Now, if thou didſt receive it, why doſt thou glory " as if thou hadſt not received it?"—What can be at once more pious, more humble, and more rational than this? what more directly contrary to the ſpiritual pride of an overweening enthuſiaſt?

Through

Through the entire of the firſt epiſtle to the Corinthians, we find the ſame ſpirit of meekneſs and mildneſs prevail; willing to avoid all ſelf-commendation, and not to cenſure or rebuke his adverſaries, while forbearance was poſſible, he claims the regard and obedience of the Corinthians, on the humble, but affecting ground of his having been their father in Chriſt.[u] "I write not theſe things to ſhame you, "but, as my beloved ſons, I warn you; for though "ye have ten thouſand inſtructors in Chriſt, yet "have ye not many fathers; for in Chriſt Jeſus "have I begotten you, through the goſpel; where-"fore I beſeech ye, be ye followers of me."

The ſecond epiſtle to the Corinthians was written under circumſtances ſomewhat different from the firſt: this had produced a conſiderable effect on that church, a great majority of the Chriſtians there, had been awakened to a due ſenſe of their errors and offences; they had in conſequence publicly excommunicated the inceſtuous perſon—they had forſaken their falſe teachers, and ſubmitted to the authority of the apoſtle with the ſincereſt marks of penitence; but ſtill theſe falſe teachers preſerved ſome influence, and ſeveral partizans; to maintain their party, they laboured to exalt their own characters, and to degrade and miſrepreſent, with the moſt inſidious malignity, the character and conduct of St. Paul: here then the apoſtle was under the neceſſity of

[u] 1 Cor. iv. 14.

ſpeaking

ſpeaking plainly and fully, to curb the arrogance of his opponents—to vindicate himſelf—to convince their deluded followers of the crime and danger of following ſuch falſe guides; but in doing this, much difficulty occurred; [x] if he anſwered nothing to what was charged againſt him, his ſilence might be interpreted guilt and confuſion; if he defended himſelf, he was accuſed of vanity, ſelf-commendation and folly; but he extricates himſelf out of all theſe difficulties with ſingular addreſs.

The falſe teachers ſeem to have been Jews, and to have prided themſelves on their proficiency in the Jewiſh law, the permanent obligation of which they probably maintained; they had alſo brought [y] letters of recommendation to the Corinthians, which contributed not a little to maintain their authority. St. Paul, without denying the divine original, or diſparaging the excellence of the Jewiſh law, ſhews that it was now ſuperſeded by the Chriſtian, the ſuperiority of which he proves, from its greater clearneſs, its more extenſive object, and its univerſal obligation; and he alledges, that having diſpenſed to the Corinthians this ſacred gift of divine mercy with ſincerity, and taught the word of God in truth, he required no letters of recommendation to them, for "that their "converſion to Chriſtianity was his commendation, "known and read of all men." That he was to them an ambaſſador of Chriſt, and therefore uſed great

[x] Vid. Locke's Note on 2 Cor. v. 12. 2 Cor. iii.

plainneſs

plainneſs of ſpeech, ſtudying only to be accepted at the judgment ſeat of God; that "to God he was "manifeſt, and he truſted his integrity was alſo "manifeſt to the conſciences of the Corinthians;" [z] that if he commended himſelf, it was not from vanity, but to give them materials to anſwer on his behalf "thoſe who gloried in appearance and not in "heart."—Whenever he introduces any appeal to his inſtruction, his ſufferings, and his merits as an apoſtle, it is with many apologies, for what he terms this "fooliſhneſs of boaſting," thus forced on him. Every where he attributes his power and his ſucceſs to their true origin, the Divine aid, and ſpeaks of himſelf with the profoundeſt ſelf-abaſement. And as the apoſtle ſpeaks of himſelf with the caution and humility of a compoſed, but pious mind, ſo he ſpeaks of his opponents with the firmneſs of conſcious innocence, and the ſteady tone of juſt authority, without ruſhing into the violence of invective, or ſinking into the meanneſs of hypocritical conceſſion. Sometimes he employs a ſtrong, but refined [a] irony. Sometimes he ſtates his own conduct and ſufferings, for the purpoſe of their being contraſted with the conduct of the falſe teachers; but after ſtating his own claims to the regard of the Corinthians, forbears drawing the oppoſite ſide of the picture, and leaves his readers, who were all acquainted with the facts, to form the compariſon themſelves.

[z] 2 Cor. v. 11. [a] Vid. 2 Cor. x. from verſe 8 to the end, and chap. xi.

In

In one paſſage, and only one, does the apoſtle expreſsly load his opponents with the ſevere charges of being "[b] falſe apoſtles"—"deceitful workers"—"miniſters of ſatan, who transformed themſelves "into angels of light, appearing as miniſters of "righteouſneſs;"—but the occaſion explains and juſtifies the ſeverity of theſe reproaches. The apoſtle, cautious of giving the leaſt room for ſuſpicion or ſcandal, amongſt a people ſo corrupt as the Corinthians, had uniformly declined accepting from them any pecuniary aſſiſtance in his wants; this diſintereſted and prudent conduct, the malignity of his enemies miſrepreſents, as a proof either that he had no affection for the Corinthians, or that he was conſcious of having no apoſtolic power, ſince he made no claim to this apoſtolic privilege—a privilege which many paſſages indicate they had availed themſelves of with the moſt intereſted avidity. Such malignant and mercenary views ſurely required and juſtified the ſeverity of the apoſtle.—It is however exceedingly remarkable, that St. Paul aſſerts in the ſtrongeſt manner, the general right of the teachers of the goſpel to claim ſupport from thoſe in whoſe inſtruction they employed their lives, though he judged it expedient totally to wave the exertion of this right in his own perſon as to the Corinthians, and never to accept ſuch ſupport, when he could by the labour of his own hands, ſuſtain himſelf; if ſuch diſintereſtedneſs, united with ſuch prudence, does not vindicate

[b] 2 Cor. xi. from 7 to 15.

St.

St. Paul equally from the charges of enthuſiaſm and impoſture, there ſeems to be no poſſibility of diſtinguiſhing vice from virtue, or falſhood from truth.

The concluſion of the ſecond epiſtle to the Corinthians exhibits moſt ſtrongly the forbearance and affection, united at the ſame time with firmneſs and zeal, which the apoſtle diſplayed, even towards thoſe who ſtill continued to deſpiſe his authority and reject his commands. "[c] We do all things, dearly beloved, "for your edifying; for I fear leaſt when I come I "ſhall not find you ſuch as I would, and that I "ſhould be found unto you ſuch as ye would not; "leſt there be debates, envyings, wraths, ſtrifes, "back-bitings, whiſperings, ſwellings, tumults—leſt "when I come again, my God will humble me "among you, and that I ſhall bewail many which "have ſinned already, and have not repented of "the uncleanneſs, and fornication, and laſciviouſ-"neſs, which they have committed." He then reminds them of the admonition contained in his firſt epiſtle; he repeats this in his ſecond with ſolemnity, "as if, ſays he, I were preſent with you the ſecond "time." He declares, that if he comes again "he "will not ſpare;" but previous to the infliction of any final cenſure or puniſhment, "every word ſhould "be eſtabliſhed by two or three witneſſes;" he prays to God that they may do no evil, wiſhing not for an opportunity of diſplaying his power, by in-

[c] 2 Cor. xii. 19. to the end of the epiſtle.

flicting

flicting any ſupernatural puniſhment, but that by their doing right he might be as if he had no ſupernatural power; " for we can do nothing, ſays the " apoſtle, againſt the truth, but for the truth; for we " are glad when we are weak, and ye are ſtrong; " and this alſo we wiſh, even your perfection; " therefore I write theſe things being abſent, leſt be- " ing preſent I ſhould uſe ſharpneſs, according to " the power which the Lord hath given me, to edi- " fication, and not to deſtruction: finally, brethren " farewell—be perfect, be of good comfort, be of " one mind, live in peace, and the God of love and " peace ſhall be with you."

From an exactly ſimilar temper proceeds the apoſtle's direction to the Theſſalonians, after having cenſured the diſorderly conduct of ſome individuals in their church.—" If any man obey not our word by " this epiſtle, note that man, and have no company " with him, that he may be aſhamed; yet count " him not as an enemy, but admoniſh him as a " brother." Thus conſtantly does this truly inſpired teacher unite the moſt fervent love for virtue and religion, with the tendereſt pity for offenders, and ſoften the ſeverity of rebuke with the mildneſs of parental affection; anxious not to reproach, but to reform—not to wound and torture, but to probe and heal the cancred heart of guilt; his zeal inſpires ſentiments of humility and mercy, and cloathes them with the artleſs language of ſoberneſs and truth, equally

equally remote from the cunning of impoſture, and the violence of fanaticiſm.

The laſt characters which I ſhall notice, as pervading the entire of St. Paul's epiſtles, and diſtinguiſhing them from the incoherent effuſions of wild fanaticiſm, are copiouſneſs of argument, a cloſe and connected train of reaſoning, and conſiſtency of doctrines. That theſe characters really belong to them, Mr. Locke, who ſtudied them with peculiar attention, and who was ſurely a competent judge of concluſive reaſoning, abundantly teſtifies; while at the ſame time he notices thoſe circumſtances which prevent this cloſe coherence and conſiſtency from being ſo clearly ſeen by careleſs readers. "[d] The "utmoſt, ſays he, ought to be done to obſerve and "trace out St. Paul's reaſoning; to follow the thread "of his diſcourſe in each of his epiſtles; to ſhew "how it goes on, ſtill directed to the ſame view, "and pertinently drawing the ſeveral incidents to-"wards the ſame point; to underſtand him right "his inferences ſhould be ſtrictly obſerved, and it "ſhould be carefully examined from what they are "drawn, and what they tend to; he is certainly a "coherent, argumentative, pertinent writer, and care, "I think, ſhould be taken in expounding him, to "ſhew that he is ſo. But though I ſay that he has "weighty aims in his epiſtles, which he ſteadily "keeps in eye, and drives at in all that he ſays,

[d] Locke's Preface to the epiſtles, p. 105, of the folio edit. vol. iii.

" yet I do not ſay that he puts his diſcourſes into " artificial method, or leads his reader into a diſtinc- " tion of his arguments, or gives them notice of new " matter by rhetorical or ſtudied tranſitions. He " has no ornaments borrowed from the Greek elo- " quence—no notions of their philoſophy mixed " with his doctrine to ſet it off; *the enticing* " *words of man's wiſdom*, whereby he means all the " ſtudied rules of the Grecian ſchools, which made " them ſuch maſters in the art of ſpeaking, he, " as he ſays himſelf, (1 Cor. ii. 4.) wholly neglect- " ed; the reaſon whereof he gives in the next verſe, " and in other places. [e] But though politeneſs of " language, delicacy of ſtyle, fineneſs of expreſſi- " on, laboured periods, artificial tranſitions, and a " very methodical arranging of the parts, with " ſuch other embelliſhments as make a diſcourſe enter " the mind ſmoothly, and ſtrike the fancy at firſt " hearing, have little or no place in his ſtyle; yet " coherence of diſcourſe, and a direct tendency of " all the parts of it to the argument in hand, are " moſt eminently to be found in him; this I take to " be his character, and doubt not but he will be " found to be ſo upon diligent examination."

Conſiſtency of doctrines, however varied his ex-

[e] Here Locke evidently means, *artificial* politeneſs, *ſtudied* delicacy, and an *affected* fineneſs of expreſſion; for that politeneſs, delicacy and eloquence, are conſpicuous in the writings of St. Paul, is moſt evident; and I truſt the reader has even in this work met with ſufficient examples to prove it ſatisfactorily.

preſſion,

preſſion, is another character, the very oppoſite of rambling fanaticiſm, which the ſame cloſe ſearcher into the human mind pronounces to belong to St. Paul. "[f] He that reads him, ſays he, with the attention I propoſe, will eaſily obſerve, that as he was full of the doctrine of the goſpel, ſo it lay all clear and in order, open to his view. When he gave his thoughts utterance upon any point, the matter flowed like a torrent; but then it is plain, it is a matter he is perfectly maſter of. He fully poſſeſſed the entire revelation he had received from God; had thoroughly digeſted it; all the parts were formed in his mind into one well-compacted, harmonious body, ſo that he was no way at an uncertainty, nor ever the leaſt at a loſs concerning any branch of it. One may ſee his thoughts were all of a piece in all his epiſtles; his notions were at all times uniform and conſtantly the ſame, though his expreſſions very various. In them, he ſeems to take great liberty."

Such is the character of St. Paul's writings, by a man of the moſt unſhackled mind, and the ſtrongeſt judgment. If this character is well founded, it is not poſſible the apoſtle could have been in any degree tinctured with enthuſiaſm; ſtrong coherence of reaſoning, and uniform conſiſtency of doctrine, are, as it were, the very criterions of ſobriety of underſtanding. But though theſe characters are moſt directly

[f] Locke's Preface to the epiſtles, p. 106.

deciſive of the point I have ſo long endeavoured to eſtabliſh, I have reſerved them for the laſt; becauſe it is next to impoſſible to prove their reality otherwiſe than by referring the reader to the epiſtles themſelves, and forming on them a continued comment. Detached paſſages, ſeparated from the entire context, would be very inconcluſive proofs; becauſe thus ſeparated that coherence becomes indiſcernable, which in the original was conſpicuous; or ſhould it be apparently preſerved, it might be ſuſpected that it was only apparently, as a connection might ſeem to be given to the quoted paſſages, which the context perhaps would ſhew to be imaginary and overſtrained. But the exiſtence of ſuch coherence and conſiſtency is not leſs real, or their concluſiveneſs, as to the apoſtle's total freedom from fanaticiſm, leſs certain, becauſe they cannot be drawn out in words, or ſhewn any other way than by a reference to the epiſtles themſelves.

I would remark however that all the characters we have hitherto noticed, which were moſt capable of being illuſtrated by particular examples, lead us to preſume that theſe alſo would be found. Cloſe reaſoning, and conſiſtent doctrines, are no more than we ſhould expect from a writer, who, as has been ſhewn, adapts his manner exactly to the relation he bears to thoſe whom he addreſſes; who never aſſumes an authority beyond what he may juſtly claim, and ſafely exerciſe—who cloaths even his ſevereſt rebukes, and ſtricteſt prohibitions, in language the moſt

moſt mild and conciliating—who, though warm, and zealous, and vehement, is ever ſoftened by charity, and controuled by diſcretion; and ſuch undoubtedly was St. Paul.

It ſeems to me almoſt wholly unneceſſary to multiply further proofs of St. Paul's freedom from enthuſiaſm; I will only remind my reader of his caution to preſerve his epiſtles from being counterfeited, and to ſecure them an immediate reception from the churches to which they were addreſſed. [g] By writing them

[g] 1 Cor. xvi. 21. The ſalutation of me, Paul, with mine own hand.

Gal. vi. 11. Ye ſee how large a letter I have written unto you with mine own hand.

Epheſ. vi. 21. But that ye alſo may know my affairs, and how I do, Tychicus, a beloved brother, and faithful miniſter in the Lord, ſhall make known to you all things; whom I have ſent unto you, for the ſame purpoſe, that ye might know our affairs, and that he might comfort your hearts.

Phil. iv. 15. Now, ye Philippians, know alſo, that in the beginning of the goſpel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church communicated with me in giving and receiving, but ye only; for even at Theſſalonica ye ſent once, and again, to my neceſſity:—and verſe 18, I am full, having received of Epaphroditus the things from you. Coloſſ. iv. 7. All my affairs ſhall Tychicus declare unto you, whom I have ſent for the ſame purpoſe. Ib. 16. When this epiſtle is read amongſt you, cauſe that it be read alſo in the church of the Laodiceans, and that ye read the epiſtle from Laodicea. The ſalutation by the hand of me, Paul. Remember my bonds. 1 Theſ. v. 27. I charge you by the Lord, that this epiſtle be read unto all the holy brethren. 2 Theſ. iii. 17. The ſalutation of Paul, with mine own hand, which is the token in every epiſtle. 2 Tim. iv. 9. Do thy diligence

them with his own hand—or by annexing a ſignature and cloſing ſalutation, in his own hand—by charging

ligence to come ſhortly unto me:—verſe 10. Demas hath forſaken me, &c. only Luke is with me; take Mark and bring him with thee. The cloak that I left at Troas with Carpus, when thou comeſt bring with thee, and the books; but eſpecially the parchments:—and 21. Do thy diligence to become before winter, &c. The whole chapter ſhould be read, as a proof of the genuineneſs and natural ſtrain of the epiſtle. Tit. i. 5. For this cauſe left I thee in Crete, &c. Tit. iii. 12. When I ſhall ſend Artemas unto thee, or Tychicus, be diligent to come unto Nicopolis, for I have determined there to winter; bring Zenas, the lawyer, and Apollos, on their journey diligently, that nothing be wanting unto them.

Philemon 22. Withal prepare me a lodging; for I truſt that through your prayers I ſhall be given unto you.

Theſe circumſtances, and a variety of others, ſtated in this chapter; and above all, thoſe coincidences ſo lately brought into notice by the critical ingenuity of Archdeacon Paley, in his Horæ Paulinæ, ſeem to prove, I had almoſt ſaid to demonſtration, the genuineneſs of St. Paul's epiſtles, and the reality of the tranſactions to which he alludes, and by conſequence the truth of the whole hiſtory of the firſt promulgation of Chriſtianity.

The epiſtle to the Hebrews, in which ſuch particulars as theſe do not occur, was probably on that account, not univerſally received by the caution of ſome early Chriſtians, though on enquiry it was afterwards received on ſufficient proof. As it was not, however, neceſſary for my purpoſe, I have made little or no uſe of it in my arguments on this ſubject. The abſence, however, of any direct avowal of St. Paul's, being himſelf the writer, and of ſuch particulars as might diſcover him to the readers, may have been *deſigned*, according to the opinion of Clement of Alexandria, as cited by Euſebius, "writing to the "Hebrews, who had conceived a prejudice againſt him, and "were ever ſuſpicious of him, he wiſely declined ſetting his "name

charging that his epiſtles be read publicly to all the holy brethren, and carried to be read from one church to another—by joining in the ſuperſcription and the ſalutation, the names of the chief miniſters, and moſt reſpectable individuals of the church from whence he wrote, and of the church to which he wrote, and ſending them by choſen meſſengers, whom he names—by his mixing private and domeſtic circumſtances and counſels with his religious inſtructions to his friends: ſuch circumſtances as theſe ſtrongly confirm the freedom of the apoſtle from that wild enthuſiaſm, which, wrapt up in extacies and myſteries, neglects all precautions, and deſpiſes all concerns neceſſary to be attended to in the common courſe of life: but they ſerve a ſtill more valuable purpoſe, they eſtabliſh beyond doubt, that theſe epiſtles could never have gained any credit in the Chriſtian world, if they had not been acknowledged by the reſpective churches, to which they were addreſſed, from the very period when they were ſaid to have been ſent to them; and that theſe churches could not poſſibly be deceived in attributing them to the apoſtle at that period. If they conſiſted only of

" name at the beginning, leaſt he ſhould offend them."—Vid. Lardner, vol. 6, p. 411, edit. of 1788. Hence, as it appears to me, he gives them ſcarce any intimation of the author till towards the cloſe of the epiſtle, and even then obſcurely, and with apparent apprehenſion. " I beſeech ye brethren ſuffer the " word of exhortation; for I have written a letter unto you in " a few words: know ye that our brother Timothy, is ſet at " liberty, with whom, if he come ſhortly, I will ſee you."

general

general advice and exhortations, we might, perhaps, admit a poſſibility of deception; but when they were addreſſed to particular perſons, ſaid to be at one time at a particular place—carried by a ſpecial meſſenger, who is named—marked with a certain ſignature, ſuppoſed to be known to the people addreſſed, ſpecifying certain particulars which they are requeſted to perform, and referring to letters received from, and converſations held with them, how utterly impoſſible a forgery ſhould gain credit with theſe immediate proofs of its own falſity! If it appeared *at the time it was ſaid to be written*, would not the perſons to whom it was addreſſed immediately reply, we ſee not the meſſenger by whom it is ſaid to be brought—we know not this ſignature—we will wait till the apoſtle performs theſe promiſes here made, in perſon—we know nothing of the letters from us, and the converſations with us, to which he alludes. If we ſuppoſe it to be produced *at a period ſubſequent to that at which it ſtates itſelf to be written*, the difficulties againſt it would encreaſe a thouſand fold; what would be the obvious anſwer? we never heard of this before; if it was written, and ſent by the apoſtle from a particular place, by a ſpecial meſſenger, ſo long ago, where has it lain ſince? In ſhort, the epiſtles of St. Paul carry with them internal marks of authenticity and ſobriety, which render it utterly inconceivable they ſhould be the offspring of forgery or fanaticiſm.

Of

Of the epiſtles compoſed by the remaining apoſtles it is ſcarcely neceſſary to add, that they alſo are free from thoſe various extravagancies and weakneſſes which detect and diſgrace the rants of enthuſiaſm; for the moſt curſory peruſal will prove that they are much more obviouſly ſo than the epiſtles of St. Paul, bearing equally the marks of ſincerity, piety, and benevolence; they are leſs bold, leſs complicated, and leſs obſcure; employed almoſt wholly in detailing and impreſſing moral duties, as the only ſure proofs of ſincere faith, and the indiſpenſible conditions of divine acceptance; and in cautioning their readers againſt falſe teachers, and perverſions of of ſcripture: we perceive nothing in them which gives even a plauſible colour to ſuſpect their authors of fanaticiſm. But when we come to examine the nature of the duties they inculcate, and the motives which they urge, we find in them the moſt deciſive proofs of a ſpirit directly contrary to that which fanaticiſm would inſpire; we perceive the genuine dictates of that heaven-taught wiſdom, which one of them ſo beautifully contraſts with the baſe counterfeit which human fraud and folly would ſubſtitute in place of the divine original. "Who is a wiſe man "(ſays St. James) and endued with knowledge among "you? let him ſhew out of a good converſation his "works with meekneſs of wiſdom; but if ye have "bitter envying and ſtrife in your hearts, glory not, "and lie not againſt the truth. This wiſdom de-"ſcendeth not from above, but is earthly, ſenſual,

"deviliſh;

" deviliſh; for where envying and ſtrife is, there is " confuſion and every evil work; but the wiſdom " that is from above is firſt pure, then peaceable, " gentle, eaſy to be entreated, full of mercy and " good fruits, without partiality, and without hypo- " criſy, and the fruit of righteouſneſs is ſown in " peace of them which make peace."

But the proof of the apoſtles' freedom from fanaticiſm, ariſing from the nature of their moral doctrines, is too important not to be fully examined; I reſerve it therefore for the ſubject of the following chapter.

CHAP.

CHAPTER VI.

The doctrines of the goſpel vindicated from the charge of enthuſiaſm.

SECTION I.

The morality of the goſpel could not have been dictated by the ſpirit of enthuſiaſm.

THE firſt leading practical character of Chriſtianity, which ſeems to diſtinguiſh it totally from the extravagancies of enthuſiaſm, appears to be this, that it teaches men to judge of the ſtrength and ſincerity of their religious principles, and the conformity of theſe principles to the Divine will, more by their practical tendency and effects, than by the force of internal confidence or devout extacy with which they may be attended. That enthuſiaſts uniformly, and I might almoſt ſay neceſſarily, judge of their religious improvement and acceptance in a manner the very reverſe of this, cannot, I think, be diſputed. Enthuſiaſm, or an ill-grounded belief of a divine inſpiration, if it does not always originate in ſpiritual pride, muſt however always contribute to produce it; ſince a falſe opinion that the Divinity condeſcends to enlighten our minds by a peculiar revelation,

velation, cannot fail to inſpire the ſelf-elating confidence, that we are the peculiar favourites of that Divinity; and the effect of ſuch a falſe confidence can ſcarcely terminate in meer ſpeculative error alone; it has an obvious, almoſt an irreſiſtable tendency to ſap the foundation of moral principle, by eſtabliſhing a falſe criterion of acceptance with God. The enthuſiaſt neglecting to compare his temper and conduct, ſoberly and humbly, with the divine will, as manifeſted by the internal admonitions of reaſon, or the clear and ſacred voice of revelation, judges of his acceptance by what he conceives a clearer and ſurer way, even by the ſtrength of his internal perſuaſions, and the luſtre of that heavenly light which appears, in his diſturbed imagination, to penetrate, warm, and purify his inmoſt ſoul. Thus men are taught to ſeek, and hope, and pray for ſecret illuminations, and ſtrong confidence; in compariſon of theſe, moral rectitude and practical piety are ſometimes wholly rejected and deſpiſed, and frequently undervalued and overlooked, as ſupplying an uncertain, or at beſt, a tedious path to ſpiritual pre-eminence; hence thoſe vices in which fanatics have ſometimes indulged themſelves without remorſe, or ſhame, or fear; as if crimes, which would irretrievably condemn the profane, could not ſully the purity of the elect: hence their writings are full of encomiums on devout extacies, ſudden internal religious raptures, while they ſeldom exhort to ſober, vigilant ſelf-government, and perſevering, active virtue; and rarely deſcribe or enforce thoſe various

various and important duties, which the deverſified and minute relations of ſocial life demand.

Now the ſpirit of Chriſtianity is directly the reverſe of this. Nothing can more clearly follow from the expreſs declarations of our Lord and his apoſtles, as well as the general tenor of the New Teſtament, than the inſeparable connection between faith and good works in the Chriſtian ſcheme. Nothing is more undeniable "[h] than that no degree of perſua- "ſion, deſire, expectation, or dependence, will be "accepted of God, without a fixed and prevailing "reſolution of ſincere and holy obedience." How expreſs and awful are the declarations of our Redeemer and our Judge on this moſt important point; "[i] not "every one that ſaith unto me, Lord, Lord, ſhall "enter into the kingdom of heaven; but they that "do the will of my Father, which is in heaven. "Many will ſay unto me in that day, Lord, Lord, "have we not propheſied in thy name? and in thy "name have caſt out devils? and in thy name have "done many wonderful works? And then will I "profeſs unto them, I never knew you; depart from "me ye that work iniquity."—Thus alſo the apoſtles—"[k] as the body without the ſpirit, ſays St. "James, is dead, ſo faith without works, is dead alſo." —And St. Paul—"[l] follow peace with all men, and

[h] Doddridge's Lectures, propoſition cxxxvii. 4.
[i] Mathew vii. 21. [k] James ii. 26. [l] Hebrews, xii. 14

holineſs,

" holineſs, without which no man ſhall ſee the Lord." —And again—" [m] God will render to every man ac- " cording to his deeds; to them, who by patient " continuance in well-doing, ſeek for glory, and " honour, and immortality, eternal life; but unto " them that are contentious, and do not obey the " truth, but obey unrighteouſneſs, indignation and " wrath, tribulation and anguiſh upon every ſoul of " man that doeth evil; of the Jew firſt, and alſo " of the Gentile; but glory, honour, and peace, to " every man that worketh good; to the Jew firſt, " and alſo to the Gentile; for there is no reſpect of " perſons with God."

Thus, however directly the goſpel condemns that proud ſelf-confidence in our own righteouſneſs, which claims as a reward due to our own merits, that divine acceptance, which human imperfection could not obtain, but from the gracious condeſcenſion, and pardoning love of God—however ſtrongly it warns us againſt that preſumption, which relies on our feeble ſtrength, unſupported by divine aid, yet, never does it ſeparate true faith from pure morality, or permit men to ſuppoſe they will be exalted to ſanctity and to heaven, independent of any effort of their own. Chriſtian faith is a moſt extenſive principle, including in its nature and effects, the whole of moral virtue; for the goſpel precepts evidently require, that we

[m] Rom. ii. 6.

ſhould

ſhould love God with all our heart, and our neighbour as ourſelves; that we ſhould labour to be perfect, as he is perfect—finally, " [n] whatſoever things " are true, whatſoever things are honeſt, whatſoever " things are juſt, whatſoever things are pure, what- " ſoever things are lovely, whatſoever things are of " good report; if there be any virtue, if there be " any praiſe, we are commanded to think on and to " practice theſe things."—Thus is the morality of the goſpel entirely free from that enthuſiaſtic pride, which, elated with its ſupernatural ſanctity, ſtoops not to the controul of reaſon; and utterly remote from that enthuſiaſtic extravagance, which, hurried away by ſpiritual raptures and extacies, ſpurns the feelings of nature, and the reſtraints of decorum. No; the goſpel guards the dignity of religion, by engaging in its ſupport, truth and juſtice, order and propriety.

A ſtill further proof that the goſpel ſyſtem is totally undebaſed by any mixture of fanaticiſm, ſeems to be found in this, that it commands men to try all pretences to inſpiration, by preciſely thoſe criterions to which enthuſiaſm would not appeal; not only by the connection of the propoſed ſyſtem, with previouſly admitted revelation, and the proofs of ſupernatural power, which its firſt teachers produced; criterions, the truth and ſoberneſs of which we have

[n] Phil. iv. 8. Vid. alſo Gal. v. 19—24.

before

before diſcuſſed, but alſo by the practical tendency of the doctrines, which are propoſed on this alledged divine authority, and by the good conduct and virtue of the teachers themſelves. By theſe criterions, did our Lord and his apoſtles demand, that they ſhould themſelves be judged; and by the ſame did they inſtruct their followers to judge of others.—"[o] Be-
"ware, ſays our Lord, of falſe prophets, which
"come to you in ſheep's clothing, but inwardly they
"are ravening wolves. Ye ſhall know them by
"their fruits; a good tree cannot bring forth evil
"fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good
"fruit. Wherefore, by their fruits ſhall ye know
"them."—And again, appealing to the ſpotleſs purity of his own exalted character, "[p] Which of you,
"ſays he, convinceth me of ſin? and if I ſpeak the
"truth, why do ye not believe?" With ſimilar confidence does the apoſtle of the Gentiles appeal to the Theſſalonians, for the purity of his conduct; "[q] Ye
"are witneſſes, and God alſo, how holily, and
"juſtly, and unblameably, we behaved ourſelves
"among you that believe." And when he is deſcribing that grand apoſtacy, which in latter times ſhould corrupt the Chriſtian church, he deſcribes it, not only as coming, "[r] with the working of Satan,
"with ſigns and lying wonders," but alſo, "with
"all deceiveableneſs of unrighteouſneſs in them that

[o] Mat. vii. 15. [p] John viii. 46. [q] 1 Theſ. ii. 10.
[r] 2 Theſ. ii. 9.

"periſh,

" periſh, becauſe they received not the love of the " truth, that they might be ſaved; and for this cauſe, " God ſhall ſend them a ſtrong deluſion, that they " ſhould believe a lie, that they all might be con- " demned who believed not the truth, but had plea- " ſure in unrighteouſneſs."—Thus perpetually does the wiſdom which is from above diſplay purity and rectitude, as the eſſential principles which directed the lives and the precepts of the firſt teachers of our holy faith.

Another diſtinguiſhing character of enthuſiaſts is, their proneneſs to believe they have already attained the ſummit of moral perfection, and a full ſecurity of divine approbation, ſo that further improvement is impoſſible, and even further vigilance unneceſſary; for to ſuch exceſs has fanaticiſm carried its extravagance, that weak and depraved mortals have dared to preſume they were exalted ſo high above their fellow men, by the immediate hand of heaven, as to be incapable of deviating into error, or ſinking into guilt.—Very oppoſite to this is the humble, but ſoul-exalting morality of the goſpel of Chriſt, which, on the one hand, forbids the moſt wicked ſinners to deſpair, and animates them to reform, by the heart-reviving aſſurance, " that if they will repent and turn " to their God, he will abundantly pardon," through the mediation of that Chriſt, " who came into the " world to ſave ſinners;" while on the other, it inculcates humility and ſelf-abaſement on all the ſons of men,

declaring, that "there is none righteous, no, not "one"—holding out a ſpotleſs model, which we ſhould perpetually labour to imitate; ſtill however convinced, that in this ſtate of trial and diſcipline we muſt never ceaſe to advance, with humble caution and vigilant ſelf-government, conſcious we are ſtill frail unprofitable ſervants.—How admirably does St. Paul exemplify this calm and humble frame of mind, even at the period when he was gifted with every apoſtolic power, employing his every faculty for the glory of God, and the ſalvation of man, and was prepared to ſeal his teſtimony to the goſpel of Chriſt, even with his blood. If ſuch a man were an enthuſiaſt, would he not, in ſuch circumſtances feel, and loudly proclaim himſelf the chief favourite of his God, purified from all moral imperfection, and ſecure from fall?—Not ſo the apoſtle—"[1] what things "were gain to me, thoſe I counted loſs for Chriſt; "yea, doubtleſs, and I count all things but loſs for "the excellency of the knowledge of Chriſt Jeſus "my Lord, if by any means I might attain to the "reſurrection of the dead; not as though I had "already attained, or were already perfect; but this "one thing I do, forgetting thoſe things which are "behind, and reaching forth unto thoſe things "which are before, I preſs toward the mark for the "prize of the high calling of God in Chriſt Jeſus;"

[1] Phil. iii. 7, 11, &c.

and

and in another paſſage he uſes theſe ſtriking words—
" [t] I keep under my body, and bring it into ſub-
" jection, leſt, that by any means, when I have
" preached to others, I myſelf ſhould be a caſtaway."

Thus does the goſpel temper the fervor of devotion, by the meekneſs of humility, and guard alike againſt that deſpair, which would prevent the reformation of vice, and that preſumptuous ſecurity which would endanger the fall of virtue; bearing in both views, the genuine characters of that wiſdom which deſcends from above, which is fully acquainted with every weakneſs of human nature, and for every weakneſs graciouſly provides a ſupport.

Another character which enthuſiaſm always diſplays, and from which Chriſtianity is totally exempt, is the contempt of all external helps to religion. Fanatics propoſing to themſelves a ſupernatural ſtate of ſpiritual exaltation, as the neceſſary effect and true teſt of genuine devotion, diſregard all rites and ceremonies as wholly worthleſs, and ſeldom encourage men to continue in the regular uſe of thoſe means of improvement, which the ordinary courſe of providence ſupplies; the attentive peruſal of the divine word, ſerious reflection, and rational enquiry into the divine attributes and conduct; public worſhip, regular private prayer, and perpetual ſelf-examina-

[t] 1 Cor. ix. 27.

tion. Seldom do fanatics exhort men to continue with humble, ſteady patience in the uſe of thoſe means, without experiencing or expecting any ſudden and violent change of temper or conduct, any direct or reſiſtleſs conviction of divine favour. Thus, while groveling ſuperſtition never aſpires to ſincere piety and rectitude, but reſts in rites and ceremonies, in tedious prayers and gloomy penances; fanaticiſm, on the contrary, with proud and preſumptuous raſhneſs, conceives it can ſuddenly reach the ſummit of religious perfection, without aſcending, by thoſe natural gradations, which reaſon and humility point out. Chriſtianity alone obſerves the true medium, teaching us to employ abſtinence and prayer, as means to excite and ſtrengthen piety and ſelf-government, though never to be ſubſtituted for theſe ennobling and ſacred qualities. The eſtabliſhed rites of Chriſtianity, baptiſm, and the ſupper of the Lord, are fewer, more ſimple, and more ſignificant, than any other religion ever has enjoined. The model on which our bleſſed Lord directs we ſhould form our prayers, is the moſt perfect and comprehenſive, the moſt pious and humble, which human imagination can conceive. Frequent devotion is enjoined, while a multitude of words is forbid. We are commanded " [u] not to forſake the aſſembling ourſelves together, " but in every thing to make known our requeſts " unto God, by prayer and ſupplication, with thankſ-

[u] Heb. x. 25.

" giving;

" giving ;" but we are alſo commanded, " to take " care, that all things be done *decently and in order.*" The obſervance of the ſabbath is required ; but ſtill in ſubordination to the great purpoſes for which it was ordained. " The ſabbath is repreſented as made " for man, not man for the ſabbath ;" and " I will " have mercy and not ſacrifice," is the general principle which is to regulate our religious duties.

On this ſubject Archdeacon Paley [x] has well obſerved, that " St. Paul's judgment, concerning a " heſitating conſcience, his opinion of the moral in- " differency of many actions, yet of the prudence, " and even the duty of compliance, when non-com- " pliance would produce evil effects upon the minds " of the perſons who obſerved it, are as correct and " juſt, as the moſt liberal and enlightened moraliſt " could form at this day."—A few inſtances will illuſtrate the juſtice of this obſervation, ſo important to our preſent argument.

The Gentile Chriſtians, who had never known any diſtinctions between different kinds of food, as being ſome clean and others unclean, were fully and juſtly perſuaded that Chriſtianity allowed them to uſe any wholeſome food without diſtinction, while the Jewiſh converts, who had been accuſtomed to the diſtinction of the law, conceived themſelves obliged to abſtain

[x] Paley's Horæ Paulinæ, the concluſion, p. 411.

from

from fleſh meat in Heathen countries for fear of being polluted, and to eat nothing but fruit and herbs, which their law left without reſtraint. Thus alſo the Gentile Chriſtians regarded all days alike, while the Jewiſh retained their ideas of the ſuperior ſanctity of ſome, according to the appointments of the Moſaic law. This difference of opinion and conduct afforded occaſion for jealouſies and diſputes; while the Gentile deſpiſed what ſeemed to him the ſuperſtitious ſcrupuloſity of the Jew, and the Jew viewed with abhorrence the profane liberty of the Gentile. On this point how admirably does St. Paul combine good ſenſe and liberality of opinion with caution, and prudence in conduct. He admits the error of the Jewiſh opinion, but maintains that ſo long as it was retained, and influenced the perſuaſion of any man's conſcience, it ought to be followed in his practice.—"[y] I know, (ſaid he) and am perſuaded by the Lord "Jeſus, that there is nothing unclean of itſelf: "but to him that eſteemeth any thing to be unclean, "to him it is unclean."—But while he approves the rational freedom of the Gentiles in their opinions, he condemns the want of prudent and benevolent attention to the prejudices of their weak, but well-meaning brethren, whoſe feelings they ſhocked, and whoſe affections they alienated, by openly deſpiſing, and acting in defiance of their ſcruples, and even

[y] Rom. xiv. which ſhould be read over to explain the facts on which this argument is founded.

diſturbing

disturbing their conscience, by tempting them to compliances which they could not sincerely approve. "[z] But if thy brother be grieved with thy meat, now "walkest thou not charitably. Destroy not him with "thy meat, for whom Christ died." And he finally determines that each should bear with the different opinions, and pass no uncharitable constructions, no sentence of reprobation, on the conduct of the other. "Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth "not; and let not him that eateth not judge him "which eateth: for God hath received him. "One man esteemeth one day above another: ano-"ther esteemeth every day alike. Let every man "be fully persuaded in his own mind."—How wholly inconsistent is this with the spirit of fanaticism.

Another instance of similar prudence in the apostle's precepts, combined with similar charity, occurs in his answer to the enquiries which the Corinthians had made concerning the liberty of eating food offered to idols. Some conceived that they might even partake of the sacrifices offered to idols, so long as they retained the firm conviction, that these idols were nothing but vain fictions, and joined not in any internal act of worship or sentiment of reverence. Others on the contrary were so scrupulous, that they were afraid of

[z] Ibid.

purchasing

purchaſing the meat offered in the market to public ſale, leſt it might have been part of ſome victim to a Heathen god, and ſhould, as they imagined, involve them in the guilt of partaking in an idolatrous ſacrifice. The apoſtle, with his uſual good ſenſe and liberality of mind, acknowledges the juſtneſs of *their* opinion, who held moſt ſtrongly the vanity of idols; but adds, that in this, as every other caſe, each man's conduct was to be regulated by the perſuaſion of his own conſcience.—" [a] As concerning therefore, ſays " he, the eating of thoſe things which are offered " unto idols, we know that an idol is nothing in the " world; and that there is no other God but one. " Howbeit, there is not in every man that know- " ledge; for ſome, with conſcience of the idol unto " this hour, eat it as a thing offered unto an idol, " and their conſcience being weak, is offended."— Here alſo he inculcates the neceſſity of acting in ſuch a manner as ſhould not offend the prejudices, or entangle the conſciences of weak brethren, however intrinſically indifferent the action may be. " Meat " (ſays he) commendeth us not to God; for neither " if we eat are we the better; neither if we eat not " are we the worſe: but take heed leſt by any " means this liberty of yours become a ſtumbling " block to them that are weak; for if any man ſee " thee, who haſt knowledge, ſit at meat in the idols " temple, ſhall not the conſcience of him which is

[a] 1 Cor. viii. and x. which ſhould alſo be read over to illuſtrate the apoſtle's reaſoning.

" weak

" weak be emboldened to eat thoſe things which are " offered unto idols, and through thy knowledge " ſhall thy weak brother periſh, for whom Chriſt " died; but when ye ſo ſin againſt the brethren, " and wound their weak conſcience, ye ſin againſt " Chriſt."—In another paſſage, where he warns the Corinthians againſt partaking in idolatrous rites, he diſtinguiſhes carefully between the general principle of Chriſtian liberty which he had laid down, and the errors or temptations to which its abuſe might lead. " [b] What ſay I then? that the idol is any thing, or " that which is offered in ſacrifice to idols is any " thing? but I ſay, that the things which the Gen- " tiles ſacrifice, they ſacrifice unto devils, and not " unto God: and I would not that ye ſhould have " fellowſhip with devils."—To cloſe our obſervation on this point, how admirably does the apoſtle diſtinguiſh between the full extent of Chriſtian liberty conſidered in general, and the expediency of exerciſing that liberty in particular caſes; and how clearly does he lay down, both by precept, and by reference to his own example, the principles which ſhould determine that expediency.—" [c] All things are " lawful for me, but all things are not expedient: " all things are lawful for me, but all things edify " not. Let no man ſeek his own, (*advantage ſolely*) " but (*alſo*) that of others. Whatſoever is ſold in the " ſhambles, that eat, aſking no queſtion for conſci-

[b] 1 Cor. x. 19, 20. [c] 1 Cor. x. 23.

" ence

" ence ſake: for the earth is the Lord's, and the
" fullneſs thereof. If any of them that believe bid
" you, and ye be diſpoſed to go; whatſoever is ſet be-
" fore you eat, aſking no queſtion for conſcience
" ſake. But if any man ſay unto you this is offered
" in ſacrifice unto idols, eat not for his ſake that
" ſhewed it, and for conſcience ſake. Conſcience, I
" ſay, not thine own, but of the other. Whether
" therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatever ye do, do
" all to the glory of God.

Thus in the goſpel pure intention—the heart—rectitude of principle—humility—ſincerity, are all in all: the humble publican is juſtified above the ſelf-righteous Phariſee; the mite of the widow is accepted beyond the oſtentatious diſplay of donations accumulated by the rich; the minuter duties of religion are to be ſincerely diſcharged; but never can they excuſe or atone for our neglecting the weightier matters of the law, " juſtice, judgement and truth." Thus in the Chriſtian ſcheme every thing has its value, place and order, aſſigned to it, with the moſt conſummate wiſdom, and the moſt perfect knowledge of the human heart; now can ſuch a ſyſtem originate from the wild extravagance of fanaticiſm? As well might we ſuppoſe the ravings of the mad-man ſhould, in order and regularity, excel the ſpeculations of the philoſopher:—no; ſuch doctrines are certainly the offspring of truth and ſoberneſs alone.

Another

Another character of Chriſtian morality, directly contrary to the genius both of fanaticiſm and impoſture, is the manner in which it inculcates the obligation, and explains the duties which ariſe from the different relations of civil ſociety. Every religious ſyſtem, founded on impoſture, has had for its chief object, to employ the power obtained by ſpiritual deluſions, in acquiring or maintaining political authority; it conſecrates the legiſlator, the ſovereign, or the magiſtrate, by inveſting them with the characters, or ſupporting them by the ſanction of the prophet and the prieſt. In this reſpect Chriſtianity, in its original ſimplicity, ſtands totally free from every ſuſpicion. The kingdom of our Saviour and his apoſtles, was moſt literally "*not of this world;*" in no one inſtance did they claim or exerciſe any degree of political power, or encroach in the leaſt on the authority of the magiſtrate, either by their precept or their practice. They did not make religion a pretext for diviſion or confuſion; the ſovereign and ſubject, the huſband and wife, the maſter and ſervant, altered not their mutual relations from the reception of Chriſtianity; none were releaſed from the ties of marriage, the bonds of allegiance, or the ſtipulations of ſervice, by the new religious character which they aſſumed; they were ſtill to continue in their reſpective ſtates, and to diſcharge their various duties, but with more ſtrict fidelity, and more exalted views: no longer "[d] as pleaſers of men, but as ſervants of

[d] Col. iii. 22.

"God."

" God." Thus anxious only for the religious and moral improvement of men, to this alone did they confine their attention: ſurely this is the conduct of diſintereſted ſincerity.

But their caution and forbearance in this reſpect, was not more decidedly free from the intereſted ambition of impoſture, than from the violence of fanaticiſm; this, in almoſt every inſtance where it has been exhibited, has carried with it a levelling principle in political affairs. The enthuſiaſt exalted, as he conceives himſelf, by the peculiar favour of God, ſcorns to yield homage to man; he tramples on the claims of eſtabliſhed authority; he deſpiſes the relation of citizen and ſubject as mean and worldly, and ſometimes, even as impious and profane. The extravagancies which flow from ſuch wild tenets too frequently diſgrace the pages of eccleſiaſtical hiſtory, to require they ſhould be here recited; but it is important to remark, how entirely Chriſtianity is free from them. How admirably does our Saviour point out the perfect conſiſtency between civil obedience to men, and pious homage to God. " [c] Render unto Cæſar the " things that are Cæſar's, and to God the things " that are God's." How carefully did he guard during his whole miniſtry, and eſpecially in the laſt awful ſcene of his trial and his ſufferings, againſt giving the leaſt pretext for ſuſpecting him of claiming any political power for himſelf, or for his followers;

[c] Matt. xxii. 21.

and

and with what uniformity do his apoſtles obſerve the ſame caution. " [f] Render to all their dues; " (ſays St. Paul) tribute to whom tribute is due; " cuſtom to whom cuſtom; fear to whom fear; " honour to whom honour. Owe no man any " thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth " another hath fulfilled the law." And in his precepts to Timothy, whom he appointed to preſide over the church of Crete, " [g] I exhort therefore " that firſt of all, ſupplications, prayers, interceſſi- " ons, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; " for kings, and for all that are in authority; that " we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all " godlineſs and honeſty." And St. Peter, after having exhorted Chriſtians—" [h] To have their con- " verſation honeſt amongſt the Gentiles: that " whereas they ſpeak againſt you as evildoers, they " may by your good works, which they ſhall behold, " glorify God in the day of viſitation,"—immediately takes care to impreſs the neceſſity of ſimilar caution on the ſubject of political obedience; that they ſhould take care that their religion ſhould not be calumniated, as if it afforded a pretext for ſedition and licentiouſneſs. " [i] Submit yourſelves to " every ordinance of man for the Lord's ſake: whe- " ther it be to the king, as ſupreme; or unto gover- " nors, as unto them that are ſent by him for the pu- " niſhment of evildoers, and for the praiſe of them

[f] Rom. xiii. 7. [g] 1 Tim. ii. 1. [h] 1 Peter ii. 12.
[i] 1 Peter ii. 13.

" that

" that do well. For ſo is the will of God, that with " well doing ye may put to ſilence the ignorance of " fooliſh men: as free, and not uſing your liberty " for a cloak of maliciouſneſs, but as the ſervants " of God. Honour all men. Love the brotherhood. " Fear God. Honour the king." Thus Chriſtianity inculcates ſubordination and ſubmiſſion to eſtabliſhed government, as a duty of high importance in general, and peculiarly neceſſary in the peculiar ſituation which the firſt Chriſtians were placed in during the infancy of their religion, when it appeared as a diſtinct ſect, under a Heathen government, connected with the religion of the Jews, who ſo frequently joined in tumults and ſedition againſt the Roman empire, till they were cruſhed with utter ruin. To enforce ſuch a duty by ſuch motives, ſeems to me wholly inconſiſtent with the genius of fanaticiſm.

But though Chriſtianity inculcates ſubordination thus ſtrongly as a general duty, rendered ſtill more important by the peculiar ſituation of the primitive Chriſtians; I perfectly agree with an ingenious writer, who with too much haſty aſſertion on the nature of Chriſtian morality, has, however, combined much judicious obſervation—" [k] That the Chriſtian " legiſlator every where preſerves a remarkable ſilence " on ſubjects eſteemed of all others of the higheſt

[k] Soame Jenyns' Internal View of the Evidence of Chriſtianity, 7 edit. p. 53 and 54, Dublin, 1776.

" importance,

" importance, civil government, natural policy, and " the rights of war and peace; of theſe he has not, " (ſays this writer) taken the leaſt notice, probably " for this plain reaſon, becauſe it would have been " impoſſible to have formed any explicit regulations " concerning them, which muſt not have been incon- " ſiſtent with the purity of his religion, or with the " practical obſervance of ſuch imperfect creatures as " men ruling over, and contending with each other: " for inſtance, had he forbid all reſiſtance to the " reigning powers, he had conſtituted a plan of " deſpotiſm, and made men ſlaves; had he allowed " it, he muſt have authorized diſobedience, and " made them rebels; had he in direct terms prohi- " bited war, he muſt have left his followers for ever " an eaſy prey to every infidel invader; had he per- " mitted it, he muſt have licenſed all that rapine " and murder, with which it is unavoidably attend- " ed:" thus this writer, as it ſeems to me, with equal ingenuity and truth. If we admit his opinion, ſurely it cannot be queſtioned, that this ſilence of Chriſtianity, wherever it would have been unwiſe and unſafe to give direct precepts, diſplays not only ſound ſenſe, but ſuch a divine wiſdom and foreſight, as are plainly inconſiſtent with enthuſiaſm. But though Chriſtianity declines every queſtion with reſpect to different forms of government, it is, to adopt the obſervation of the judicious Paley—" [1] It

[1] Vide Paley's View of Evidence of Chriſtianity, p. 373—Dublin edit. 1794.

" is

" is alike applicable, uſeful and friendly to them all;
" in as much, as firſt it tends to make men virtuous,
" and as it is eaſier to govern good men than bad
" men, under any conſtitution:—as 2dly, it ſtates
" obedience to government in ordinary caſes to be,
" not merely a ſubmiſſion to force, but a duty of
" conſcience:—as 3dly, it induces diſpoſitions fa-
" vourable to public tranquillity, a Chriſtian's chief
" care being, to paſs quietly through this world to a
" better:—as 4thly, it prays for communities, and
" for the governors of communities, of whatever
" deſcription or denomination they may be, with a
" ſolicitude and fervency proportioned to the influ-
" ence which they poſſeſs upon human happineſs—
" all which, in my opinion, is juſt as it ſhould be.
" Had there been more to be found in ſcripture of a
" political nature, or convertible to political purpoſes,
" the worſt uſe would have been made of it, on
" which ever ſide it ſeemed to lie."

Yet another character of Chriſtian wiſdom remains, which I have reſerved for the laſt; becauſe, as it pervades and controuls the whole goſpel ſcheme, ſo is it moſt decidedly contrary to the genius of enthuſiaſm: even this, " [m] that it is peaceable and gentle, and
" eaſy to be entreated; full of mercy and good
" fruits." That this muſt ever be directly contrary to the nature of fanaticiſm, reaſon and experience prove beyond the poſſibility of doubt. Fanatics

[m] James iii. 17.

conceiving

conceiving they are the peculiar favourites of the Divinity, are prone to deſpiſe all men whom they think leſs favoured than themſelves. Convinced that their opinions are the dictates of inſpiration, and their cauſe the cauſe of heaven, they deem contradiction impious, and reſiſtance criminal; and while no true inſpiration ſupplies wiſdom to confute or perſuade their adverſaries—while they can exert no miraculous power to prove their divine authority on clear and rational grounds, they will be naturally led to bear down contradiction and reſiſtance by clamour and outrage, to puniſh obſtinacy by the pious juſtice of perſecution, and convert men to the reception of thoſe truths, which they deem neceſſary for the ſalvation of their ſouls, by ſacrificing their bodies at the faggot and the ſtake; and even when the impulſe of humanity, or the influence of religious principles, though corrupted and obſcured, prevents the enthuſiaſt from proceeding to ſuch extremities as theſe; yet he will neceſſarily diſcover impatience of contradiction, unyielding obſtinacy, and ſevere condemnation, of all who differ from, or oppoſe him. Scarcely ever will he entertain any wiſh to concede, or conciliate, or exerciſe any care to avoid giving occaſion of diſſenſion or offence: here then it is, that true Chriſtianity moſt clearly proves its heavenly original; who does not ſee that every page, every line of the goſpel, breathes the calm, and benign, and merciful ſpirit which its divine Author diſplayed,

when [n] he checked the intemperate zeal of his followers, who would have called down the fire from heaven on the Samaritans, when they refuſed to receive him?—"He turned and rebuked them, and "ſaid, ye know not what manner of ſpirit ye are of; "for the Son of Man is not come to deſtroy men's "lives, but to ſave them." But it is not merely in forbidding and reprobating every ſpecies, and every pretext of perſecution that the heavenly wiſdom of the goſpel appears moſt diſtinguiſhed. It is ſtill more illuſtriouſly conſpicuous, in its reprobating every principle and feeling which lead not to perſecution only, but even to diſcord, and offence of every kind, and particularly on points of difference in religious opinions and religious conduct. What impetuous and over-bearing fanatic would have dictated ſuch admirable precepts as St. Paul has done in language beautiful, becauſe it is the language of a heart overflowing with benignity, with humility, with every pious and dignified principle which can ennoble the heart of man.—"[o] Him, ſays he, that is weak in "the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful diſputa-"tions. Why doſt thou judge thy brother? or why "doſt thou ſet at nought thy brother? for we ſhall "all ſtand at the judgment ſeat of God. So then "every one ſhall give account of himſelf to God. "Let us not therefore judge one another any more; "but judge this rather, that no man put a ſtumbling-

[n] Luke ix. 55.

[o] Rom. xiv. and 1 Cor. viii. & x.

"block

" block or an occaſion to fall in his brother's way.
" For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink;
" but righteouſneſs, and peace, and joy, in the Holy
" Ghoſt. For he that in theſe things ſerveth Chriſt,
" is acceptable to God, and approved of men.
" Let us therefore follow after the things which
" make for peace, and things wherewith one may
" edify another. We that are ſtrong ought to bear
" the infirmities of the weak, and not to pleaſe our-
" ſelves: for even Chriſt pleaſed not himſelf;
" wherefore receive ye one another, as Chriſt alſo
" received us to the glory of God. Give none
" offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles,
" nor to the church of God; even as I pleaſe all
" men in all things, not ſeeking mine own profit,
" but the profit of many, that they may be ſaved:
" [p] be ye therefore followers of me, even as I am of
" Chriſt." Let me appeal to the reaſon and the feelings of every man, whether ſuch language and ſuch ſentiments could by any poſſibility proceed from a blind and furious enthuſiaſt. But ſtill further, though an enthuſiaſt might entertain ſuch ſentiments, and inculcate ſuch precepts, we can hardly ſuppoſe he would make theſe the leading principles,

[p] This laſt advice of St. Paul to his followers has been advanced by ſome in proof of his ambition, and of that being the true principle of his converſion. How erroneouſly, is manifeſt from the entire paſſage here quoted; moral imitation, and not factious adherence of followers to an ambitious leader, was plainly the object of the apoſtle.

the foundation and ſupport of his whole ſyſtem of morality, and put forward this peaceableneſs, this gentleneſs, this mercy, this tolerance, as preferable to all other virtues combined; or rather ſo eſſential to the Chriſtian character, that without them no Chriſtian virtue could be ſuppoſed to exiſt. Would a fanatic have done this? nay, further ſtill, would a fanatic, who we muſt ſuppoſe had worked himſelf up into a falſe conviction of his being inſpired and directed by heaven, becauſe this inſpiration and direction had long been the conſtant object of his wiſhes and his prayers, and now formed his happineſs and his pride? would ſuch a man, I aſk, have preferred this mercy, this brotherly love—in one word, this Chriſtian charity, to that very inſpiration, to all his apoſtolic gifts, to all his miraculous power? yet this St. Paul has done. "[q] Though I ſpeak, ſays he, with the tongues "of men and of angels, and have not charity, "I am become as ſounding braſs or a tinkling cymbal; and though I have the gift of "prophecy, and underſtand all myſteries, and all "knowledge; and though I have all faith, ſo that "I could remove mountains, and have not charity, "I am nothing." Would an enthuſiaſt have diſtinguiſhed between unbounded generoſity to the poor; nay, between the firmneſs of martyrdom and this ſacred principle of Chriſtian benevolence? No. Yet St. Paul has ſo diſtinguiſhed—"[r] though I beſtow all my goods to feed the poor; and though

[q] 1 Cor. xiii. [r] Ibid.

"I give

" I give my body to be burned, and have not cha-
" rity, it profieth me nothing." Why? becauſe when this benevolence is wanting, the ſource of every virtue is dried up; for from this only can they flow pure and genuine. 'Tis " charity *only* that " ſuffereth long, and is kind. Charity envieth not " —is not puffed up—is not eaſily provoked— " thinketh no evil: and finally, there abideth " faith, hope, charity; but the greateſt of theſe " is charity!"

I have thus conſidered a few, and but a few, of thoſe characters of Chriſtian morality, in which it is moſt ſtrongly and directly contraſted with enthuſiaſm. Let me now entreat my reader to reflect for a moment, who were the men who poſſeſſed this wiſdom, and whence did they acquire it? Were they the philoſophic ſages of Greece and Rome? No. Were they politic and experienced legiſlators and ſenators? No. Were they in the Jewiſh nation the wiſe and learned doctors of the law? No—a Jewiſh peaſant, the reputed ſon of a carpenter, and who for thirty years had reſided with a private and obſcure family, calls together twelve tax-gatherers and fiſhermen; they become diſtracted with fanaticiſm, and the ſyſtem we have examined, is formed of the ravings of theſe fanatics collected and preſerved:—but there was among them one learned, educated man, St. Paul; he, perhaps it may be ſaid, connected this admirable ſyſtem of purity and brotherly love. We admit the learning

learning and the talents of the apoſtle to the Gentiles; but let us not forget what we have already obſerved, that his natural temper was impetuous and warm, and that his education, added to his knowledge of Heathen literature the doctrine and traditions of the Phariſees; he was educated in their habits of pride, and bigotry, and intolerance; while in his ſober reaſon he was himſelf a bigot, and a perſecutor even unto death: but he was ſuddenly hurried away, as the objector would ſuppoſe, by the frenzy of enthuſiaſm, and from that moment he became peaceable and gentle, merciful, liberal and tolerant. Gracious God! will men believe all this, and yet perſevere to ridicule others for blind, irrational, implicit faith? No. Let us not judge hardly of thoſe who differ from us; but if they judge unfairly of our cauſe, of the cauſe of Chriſtianity and benevolence, let us not, as we value truth and piety, let us not yield lightly to their *raſh* opinion. Surely if theſe characters belong to the morality of the goſpel, and are compared with the natural diſadvantages under which its teachers laboured, they plainly beſpeak a divine original.

SECTION

SECTION II.

The ſpeculative doctrines of Chriſtianity did not originate in enthuſiaſm.

THE ſpeculative doctrines of Chriſtianity, ſo far as our preſent ſubject leads us to examine them, may be conſidered perhaps as of three different deſcriptions. 1ſt. Thoſe which reaſon might have diſcovered, or at leaſt when diſcovered, may perceive to be certainly true, from their connection with ſelf-evident principles of knowledge;—2dly. Thoſe which reaſon could only perceive to be probable, not certain, and in which therefore the light of revelation may be highly important to diſpel our doubts, and direct our opinions;—and 3dly. Such doctrines as are plainly above reaſon, which it had no conception of antecedent to the exiſtence of Chriſtianity, and which, after they are diſcovered, it receives ſolely on the authority of revelation, requiring only that they ſhall not contradict thoſe principles of knowledge, which reſt on ſelf-evident or demonſtrative certainty.

It is foreign from the object of this treatiſe to enter into metaphyſical or abſtract diſcuſſions, or compare the probability of controverted opinions. It is deſirable, and happily it is eaſy, to ſeparate ſuch queſtions from

from the main proofs which ſupport the goſpel of Chriſt; and whatever may be the particular profeſſion or the private opinions of an author, he ought not to bring them forward to clog, with unneceſſary difficulties, ſo important an enquiry as that which relates to the origin and foundation of the whole Chriſtian ſcheme. Under this impreſſion I ſhall confine myſelf to ſuch brief obſervations as the nature of my ſubject ſeems neceſſarily to require.

It will not be queſtioned that Chriſtianity teaches, in the moſt clear and expreſs manner, all thoſe doctrines which reaſon might have diſcovered, or when diſcovered can demonſtrate to be true, and which are therefore termed the principles of natural religion: the exiſtence of one God, the firſt cauſe of all things, endowed with infinite perfection; the dependance of man on him, and the conſequent neceſſity of obedience to his will, ſo far as it is known, as the only mode of ſecuring the greateſt degree of perfection and happineſs to which man can attain. But abſtractedly conſidered, this would not prove that the teachers of Chriſtianity were either divinely inſpired, or even free from enthuſiaſm or impoſture; theſe truths were expreſsly taught in the Jewiſh religion, and therefore may have been borrowed from it either by deceivers or fanatics. But when we contemplate the *manner* in which theſe truths are taught, and compare it with the national prejudices, the low rank, and the unlearned education of the firſt preachers of the

the goſpel, the compariſon will, I think, afford a ſtrong preſumptive proof of their freedom, either from the artifice of impoſture or the weakneſs of fanaticiſm; they teach the truths of natural religion with much zeal and earneſtneſs, and at the ſame time with ſuch ſimplicity as ſeem unaccountable, if we ſuppoſe them artful, intereſted deceivers. "[s] To "love the Lord our God with all our heart, and "ſoul, and mind," they repreſent as "the firſt and "great commandment;" the temper of mind to exalt and perfect which, the whole diſcipline of this world, as well as the entire Chriſtian ſcheme, is ſtated to be ſubſervient. On this they ground the love of our neighbour as ſecond in the rank of moral duties. All the attributes of the Divinity are repreſented in ſtriking, though frequently familiar terms and images, but always ſo as to promote virtue and purity of heart, juſtice and mercy to our fellow-creatures, and an entire ſubmiſſion to the will, and truſt in the providence of God. The perſonal intereſts or prejudices of the preachers never intermix with, or debaſe this ſacred ſubject. Now, is not all this inconſiſtent with the character either of intereſted artifice or deluded fanaticiſm?

If in addition to this we conſider the general ſtate of religious knowledge in the world at the introduction of the goſpel, the difficulty of forming ſuch a juſt

[s] Matt. xxii. 37.

and

and pure repreſentation of natural religion, will appear ſo great as to render it very incredible, that the authors of ſuch a repreſentation ſhould have been weak and viſionary enthuſiaſts.

It is notorious that the moſt polite and learned nations of the Heathens, notwithſtanding the progreſs of learning and civilization, had continued for a ſeries of years to accumulate errror upon error, and profanation on profanation; they had degraded religion by the groſſeſt idolatry, and corrupted morality by tolerating, and even ſanctioning the fouleſt crimes. Their ſages and philoſophers made ſcarce any attempt at all, and never any ſucceſsful attempt, to check the progreſs of error, idolatry and vice, amongſt the multitude; they confined their inſtructions to the learned and ſpeculative, and in general talked an obſcure and technical language, calculated chiefly for the uſe of their reſpective ſects; and they entertained the moſt perplexing doubts on the moſt demonſtrable and fundamental truths of natural religion, ſuch as the unity, the perfections, the providence, and even the exiſtence of a God; and very rarely did they attempt to found the practice of virtue on the divine command, or teach men to expect recompence according to their works from the divine ſentence. But whatever truths they may have taught, the teachers of the goſpel (St. Paul perhaps excepted) had little opportunity of any acceſs to their inſtructions,

tions, and evidently none of them have borrowed any thing from their ſyſtems.

The Jews, it is true (moſt of them at leaſt) maintained the exiſtence, perfections, and providence of God; but almoſt every ſect of them intermixed with theſe truths errors and prejudices which corrupted their genuine ſimplicity, and weakened their practical effect. Some conceived that God might excuſe the abſence of piety and virtue, if conciliated by ceremonies and ſacrifices; others denied a future life, and thus ſubverted the ſanctions of morality; almoſt all, with the narrow views of bigots, conceived God to be excluſively the God of their own nation, and deſpiſed other nations, as unworthy his regard; and they advanced traditions and comments ſo puerile, extravagant, and even immoral, as rendered the genuine word of God of none effect.

Amidſt this general corruption of faith and practice aroſe the firſt teachers of the goſpel; and though obſcure and unlearned, though educated in the midſt of Jewiſh bigotry and ſuperſtition, they reſcued natural religion from the corruptions of both Jews and Heathens, and taught men every where to worſhip the Father in ſpirit and in truth. Does not this render it highly improbable that they were weak deluded fanatics?—nay, does it not even afford a ſtrong preſumption of their being really enlightened by

by that divine Spirit, whoſe dictates they profeſſed to declare to the children of men.

In the next place, when we direct our attention to thoſe doctrines which the light of nature could but darkly diſcern, and never certainly demonſtrate, we find that Chriſtianity has decided them exactly in that manner which reaſon admits to be moſt probable, and which moſt directly promotes the intereſt of virtue and the happineſs of ſociety. The certainty of a future ſtate—of judgment and retribution in the next period of our exiſtence—of pardon on repentance—of aſſiſtance from God in our efforts to improve—the obligation and utility of prayer—the ſuperintendance of divine Providence over all events, whether public or private, minute or important. Theſe doctrines of Chriſtianity are ſuch as the beſt men have ever wiſhed to find true, though the wiſeſt were never able to demonſtrate. Nor is it merely the doctrines themſelves, the *manner* in which they are propoſed and eſtabliſhed increaſes the probability that the firſt preachers of the goſpel were far removed from the extravagance and weakneſs of fanaticiſm; they are propoſed with great plainneſs and ſimplicity; they are eſtabliſhed, not merely by poſitive aſſertions, nor yet by ſubtle and intricate reaſonings, but by plain facts, proving at once the divine authority of the goſpel in general, and the particular certainty of the reſurrection from the dead—that great

great deciſive fact ſo eſſential to all our hopes of life and immortality.

If we conſider further, that Chriſtianity exhibits this infinitely important ſcheme of doctrines, undebaſed by thoſe puerile abſurdities and wild extravagancies which are perpetually blended with all fanatical ſyſtems, our readineſs to admit their divine original ought ſurely to be conſiderably encreaſed.

Let it then be remembered, that the Chriſtian revelation paſſes by in ſilence, or expreſſes in general and guarded terms, many points which enthuſiaſts are apt to dwell on with peculiar complacency, and to dreſs up with a train of fictitious circumſtances which a ready invention ſupplies, or a heated and deluded imagination miſtakes for realities. Examine with this view the accounts which the New Teſtament gives us of a future ſtate, and how totally unlike is it to the wild viſions of fanaticiſm. We are told that good men ſhall riſe with bodies "glo-" rified and incorruptible." We are taught that the nature of the happineſs to be enjoyed in another life, cannot be diſtinctly apprehended by our preſent faculties. "Eye hath not ſeen, nor ear heard, neither "hath it entered into the heart of man, what God "hath prepared for them that love him." It is declared that men will be rewarded in the next life, according to the uſe which they make of the talents

[t] talents with which they are entruſted in this; that thoſe who are here active and faithful, will hereafter be employed in more important truſts, and more extenſive activity. We are led to believe that much of our happineſs will conſiſt in an encreaſed knowledge of God, and of his works; in being "made [u] like "unto him in purity and benevolence;" in enjoying the ſociety of higher ſpirits, and "juſt men made "perfect." We are [x] aſſured, that thoſe who drop into the grave with minds ſunk in the ſordid and baſe purſuits of this world, and polluted with unrepented crimes, ſhall not enter into the kingdom of God. Thus every thing neceſſary to encourage virtue and religion is diſcloſed, without the intermixture of a ſingle circumſtance which could inflame ſpiritual pride, indulge ſenſual deſire, or gratify idle curioſity; we meet with no minute deſcription of the pleaſures, the employments, the glories of that future ſtate, which might, perhaps if ſtrongly impreſſed upon our imagination, draw us off from the neceſſary buſineſs, or make us loath the innocent pleaſures of the preſent life. We are taught "[y] that it is ap-"pointed to all men once to die, and after that the "judgment;" but of the intermediate ſtate of thoſe

[t] Vid. the parable of the talents, Mat. xxv.

[u] 1 John iii. 2 & 3.

[x] 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10. Vid. alſo Mat. xiii. 41—49.

[y] Heb. ix. 27. Vid. alſo the entire 25th chapter of Mathew. Vid. alſo Biſhop Law on the nature and end of death in the Chriſtian covenant, annexed to his theory of religion, with the appendix.

who

who ſleep in death, as we need only know that our ſtate of trial terminates with this life, and "that in the "grave no man can work," ſo this only is poſitively and diſtinctly told: thus alſo the exiſtence of ſuperior orders of intelligences is aſſerted, but their diſtinctions and offices, their powers and employments, as they concern not us, no attempt is made to diſcloſe them.

It deſerves to be noticed, that if the writers of the Goſpels, Acts and Epiſtles, had been ſubject to the dominion of a heated imagination, and been miſled by the deluſive viſions of fanaticiſm, many facts occurred in the courſe of the hiſtory they relate, which would have naturally led them to indulge in imaginary excurſions into the ſpiritual world, and to gratify their own vanity, as well as catch their readers attention by pretending to deſcribe the particulars of that ſcene ſo intereſting to human curioſity. They ſometimes relate appearances of angels; ſometimes they mention viſions by which they were inſtructed in ſome important point of doctrine, or directed to ſome particular mode of conduct; eſpecially many inſtances occur of individuals, well known to themſelves, who had riſen from the dead; and above all, the leading fact on which their relation turns, is the reſurrection of their Lord, who they aſſert [z] *for forty days after was ſeen of them, and ſpoke*

[z] Acts i. 3.

"*of*

" *of the things which belong to the kingdom of God.*" Now did it not require more than ordinary ſobriety of mind, as well as the ſtricteſt attention to truth, never to be ſeduced by ſuch alluring opportunities to conſecrate the fictions of art, or the deluſions of imagination, as the dictates of heaven, and never once to break that ſilence they obſerved on all points, in which, however ardently men may deſire information, it is not neceſſary they ſhould obtain it.

Thus, whether we conſider the importance of the doctrines which Chriſtianity has advanced on the ſubject of our preſent relation to the Deity, and our future expectations from him, the clear dignified and convincing mode in which they are eſtabliſhed, or the omiſſion of all thoſe topics, which either deceivers or fanatics would naturally have deſcanted on with particularity and eagerneſs, in every one of thoſe views we perceive, that integrity and ſobriety of mind which diſtinguiſhed the firſt teachers of our faith; and in every one we diſcover ſtrong marks of genuine inſpiration.

SECTION

SECTION III.

The more myſterious doctrines of Chriſtianity conſidered.

WE are now to notice, as far as our ſubject requires, thoſe DOCTRINES of Chriſtianity which are plainly ABOVE REASON, which were adopted by our Lord and his apoſtles from the Jewiſh religion, or which were firſt promulgated by themſelves, and which can be received and underſtood no further than they have judged it neceſſary to reveal them.

Our Lord commanded his apoſtles "[a] to go and "teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of "the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghoſt." The part therefore which each of theſe divine perſons have taken in the diſpenſations of God to man, as well as their relation to each other, and their mutual connection, forms a peculiar and myſterious object in the Chriſtian revelation. On the other hand, [b] this revelation exhibits to us mankind as a fallen and corrupted race, whoſe firſt parents had violated the law of their Creator, and by the violation materially altered the condition, both of themſelves and their poſterity for the worſe. It ſtates further, that this unhappy change gave occaſion for that interpoſition of God,

[a] Mat. xxviii. 18. [b] Gen. iii. Rom. v. 1 Cor. xv.

which the ſcriptures relate to have taken place for the redemption of man. Thus the circumſtances of this change in the original condition of mankind, as well as the nature and extent of the remedy provided for it, forms another moſt intereſting and important part of the goſpel ſyſtem.

All theſe doctrines relate to ſubjects which evidently lie beyond the penetration of human reaſon, and the diſcoveries of human experience; to judge about them clearly, and to underſtand them fully, we muſt be ſuppoſed accurately acquainted with the entire nature of God, and of his attributes, and the mode of conduct which theſe attributes would lead him to adopt towards the human race, connected as it may be with his ſyſtem of government over all intellectual beings. We muſt alſo be ſuppoſed capable of tracing the effects of the divine conduct on mankind, from the creation of the world till its cloſe, and eſtimating whether on the whole there did not reſult from the ſeries of diſpenſations, recorded in the ſcriptures, the greateſt quantity of virtue and happineſs which it was poſſible to produce, conſiſtently with the nature of man as a moral agent, and the views of God as the moral governor of the world. Now, who does not at the firſt glance ſee that any one human being—nay, all human beings united, would be wholly incompetent to judge of theſe things, if left to their limited capacities and limited experience, without any inſtruction from divine wiſ-

dom?

dom? Who does not ſee that the nature of theſe ſubjects is ſuch, that with regard to them men muſt be content to proceed as mere learners, convinced that they cannot diſcover the ſyſtem of meaſures which God has adopted, or penetrate into the motives which determine his conduct, further than he has thought fit to diſcloſe them? The buſineſs of reaſon then, in this caſe, is plainly confined to two points. 1ſt. To be fully aſſured of the divine authority of thoſe who claim the character of meſſengers ſent from God to inſtruct men in theſe myſterious ſubjects; and next, to take care that their inſtructions are rightly underſtood. We are however under no obligation to attend at all to doctrines on ſuch ſubjects, as men could know nothing of but by revelation, till we have been ſatisfied that the men who advance theſe doctrines have been enlightened by the Divinity; antecedent therefore to any enquiry into their doctrines, we have a right to demand from them ſuch external proofs of a divine authority as we are competent judges of. If convincing proofs are ſupplied, we muſt be ſatisfied that the general ſyſtem of doctrines thus atteſted, is undoubtedly of divine original; we ſhall therefore proceed to examine its parts, and interpret its peculiar tenets with caution and humility, admitting as a rule of interpretation, that nothing directly contradictory to the principles of intuitive or demonſtrative certainty can be true, and therefore, that if the revelation is interpreted ſo as to carry ſuch a ſenſe, it muſt have been miſinter-

preted. But these questions cannot arise till the authority of the revelation has been previously established by external proofs; and therefore (as it seems to me) a minute discussion of them is not necessary in a work designed to weigh the direct proofs, and examine the general authority of the gospel of Christ. The question I purpose to discuss is simply this—were the first teachers of Christianity deluded enthusiasts in believing themselves divinely inspired? They appeal to miracles and prophecies, as proofs of a divine interposition; were they in their belief of these facts enthusiasts? if not, neither were they enthusiasts in their belief of those doctrines, in proof of which they appeal to these facts, and therefore all these doctrines, rightly interpreted, are unquestionably true.

The existence of doctrines in Christianity, which we do not fully comprehend, affords no presumption of their having originated in the delusions of fanaticism; when we consider that they relate to subjects which have, in every age, exercised the penetration of the most acute and enlightened reasoners, without their having been able to form any clear and certain system relating to them, or to dispel that obscurity, which seems from their very nature to rest upon them. Thus the existence of natural and moral evil, is a fact which experience too fully testifies; the Deist feels it as strongly as the Christian, and it forms a difficulty, a mystery, on the principles of natural religion, of which no human sagacity has yet been

able

able to find an adequate ſolution. The difficulty of reconciling the omniſcience of God with the free agency of man, is another ſubject which has perplexed the ſpeculative enquirer. The unequal diſtribution of all natural and moral advantages amongſt men, whether we conſider nations or individuals, is not leſs difficult to account for on the principles of natural religion. We may aſk a variety of queſtions to which the Deiſt can give no ſatisfactory anſwer. Why does that Being, who is the Creator and Lord of all alike, permit ſome nations to remain barbarous, poor, enſlaved, while others are enlightened, rich and free? why are ſome individuals wiſe, ſtrong, healthy, opulent, proſperous; others ignorant, feeble, diſeaſed, dependent, unfortunate? and this without any regular proportion being obſerved, to all appearance at leaſt, between each man's external advantages and his moral merit. Theſe, and a variety of other ſimilar difficulties occur, which natural religion does not ſolve; yet we admit the principles of natural religion, becauſe they are founded on direct proofs, which are not refuted by our inability to comprehend the entire ſubject in its minuter detail. Ignorance on ſuch a ſubject only ſhews that our faculties are inadequate to its full extent, but is no refutation of what has been poſitively proved.

Of the doubts and difficulties which obſcure natural religion many remain undetermined and unexplained, even by revelation. Some perhaps, becauſe it

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may have been impoſſible to render them clear to beings, ſuch as men in their preſent ſtate of exiſtence; others, becauſe though a fuller revelation were poſſible, it yet may have been unneceſſary or inexpedient: of both theſe points we are evidently incompetent judges. It is however certain, that on many the moſt perplexing difficulties of natural religion, Chriſtianity offers a full and ſatisfactory ſolution. Thus we are no longer ſtartled at that inequality in the ways of Providence, ſo apparent in this preſent world, when we are aſſured that this life is merely a ſtate of probation and diſcipline, but that in the next this inequality will be compleatly rectified; for at the awful hour of the laſt judgment there will be "[c] no reſpect of perſons with God." On other points the goſpel ſcheme offers a ſolution which, though connected and conſiſtent in all its parts, yet partakes of that obſcurity which the nature of the ſubject ſeems to render it impoſſible to avoid, while the human faculties remain in their preſent limited ſtate. Thus as to the origin of evil, we are informed that moral evil was introduced on earth by man's tranſgreſſion; that death, and other natural evils, were its conſequence; that as ſoon as it was introduced, a remedy was provided by the interpoſition of that divine Being, "[d] without whom (it is declared) no-"thing was made that was made." The mode of

[c] Rom. ii. 11. [d] John i. Compare 3 and 14 verſes. Compare alſo Col. i. from 12 to 22.

this

this interpoſition is certainly myſterious and obſcure; but are we to wonder at this on ſuch a ſubject. In many circumſtances however, particularly thoſe of a moral kind, *even we* can perceive the conſiſtency and the advantages of this mode of interpoſition, obſcure as it is, when metaphyſically and abſtractedly conſidered.

That the ſame divine Being, who created mankind, ſhould intepoſe to reſcue his own creation from miſery and ruin, ſeems even to our reaſon natural and conſiſtent; that the effect of this interpoſition ſhould, in a certain degree, be as extenſive as the conſequences of man's original tranſgreſſion; that "[c] as in Adam "all die, ſo in Chriſt ſhall all be made alive," while individuals ſhall ſtill be reſponſible for their own conduct, and be judged according to the uſe they have made of the means of improvement afforded them—all this ſeems natural and conſiſtent: that our Redeemer ſhould appear upon earth in our own nature, to adapt his mode of inſtruction to that nature—to conciliate our affections, as well as rouſe our fears—to guide us by example as well as by precept, and by his poverty and ſufferings convince us how little eſtimation we ſhould annex to mere temporal good, and teach us humility, patience and reſignation—virtues the moſt difficult and important in this ſcene of trial,—all this is ſurely in the higheſt degree

[c] 1 Cor. xv. 22.

wiſe

wiſe and merciful; that by his reſurrection from the dead, and aſcenſion into heaven, he ſhould give the fulleſt and plaineſt proof of our own reſurrection, and of his return to judgment, and that he being appointed to judge us, he ſhould partake of *our* nature, that we may be as it were experimentally certain that "[f] he is not one who cannot be touched with the "feeling of our infirmities, but that he was in all "points tempted, like as we are, yet without ſin"—all this is ſurely admirably fitted to cheriſh vital religion and preſevering virtue, in beings ſo feeble and ſo frail as man.

Thus the Chriſtian ſyſtem of doctrines ſeems in many points ſo rational and conſiſtent, that we cannot with any plauſibility conſider it as the offspring of wild fanaticiſm; in others it is exceedingly myſterious and obſcure; but in thoſe only, where from reaſon and experience we are led to expect myſtery and obſcurity; yet even here we can diſcover ſome collateral circumſtances which confirm the preſumption that the whole ſyſtem was founded, not on deluſive viſions, but on real facts. The character of our Lord as a ſpiritual Redeemer—his ſufferings and death being a neceſſary part of his ſcheme—the effects of his interpoſition being deſigned to extend to all nations, and to form a univerſal religion; the rejection of the Jews, and the abolition or ſuſ-

[f] Heb. iv. 15.

penſion

penſion of the Moſaic law, forming a part of that plan he came to execute.—Theſe ideas were all ſo contrary to the original views and national prejudices of the apoſtles, ſo inconſiſtent with their religious opinions, as well as their temporal intereſts, that we cannot ſuppoſe they were led to adopt and to ſpread ſuch doctrines by ſpiritual deluſion or intereſted artifice; nor can we account for their embracing them, otherwiſe than by admitting that they received them in the way which they thmſelves ſtate, and that they were convinced of their truth by the facts which they detail.

It is alſo worthy of remark, that even the moſt myſterious doctrines of the goſpel have a direct connection with the leading facts which eſtabliſh the divine original of its general ſcheme. If the apoſtles declare Chriſt Jeſus to have been the Son of God, the Saviour of man, and the judge of the world, they at the ſame time relate his miracles, his inſtructions, his reſurrection and aſcenſion, by which they were aſſured of his character and dignity. If they ſpeak of the Holy Spirit, as aſſiſting in the work of redemption, they alſo teſtify that they themſelves felt his powerful influence, in communicating to them the gift of tongues, with other miraculous powers, and viſibly forwarding the diffuſion of the Chriſtian faith. If they deſcribe in ſtrong terms the moral corruption of mankind, the miſery and degradation which ariſe from it, and the expediency, or even the neceſſity, of a divine interpoſition to reſcue the human

man race from its effects; the truth of these representations is notoriously and lamentably proved by the history of every nation and every age, and the self-condemning reflections of every individual, who reviews with serioufneſs and candour his paſt life, and traces the baſe and unworthy motives which too frequently mix with and pollute even his very beſt actions. Shall we then reject a ſyſtem, which lays its foundation on a fact ſo undeniable as the corruption of man, and which offers a ſcheme of redemption, the efficacy of which is eſtabliſhed by proofs ſo clear as thoſe which ſupport the Chriſtian faith: ſhall we, I ſay, reject this ſyſtem as wild and fanatical, merely becauſe we cannot comprehend the exact mode in which this divine interpoſition produces its effects, or the preciſe degree to which its efficacy extends; ſurely this would be at once moſt arrogant and irrational.

To conclude this view of the ſpeculative doctrines of the goſpel,—It is eaſy to obſerve, that even the moſt myſterious of them are introduced in a MANNER very different from that in which experience proves to us fanatics would have introduced them; they are not ſtated to have been conveyed to the apoſtles in direct viſions, or ſudden extaſies and illuminations, unconnected with any real hiſtory, and ſeparated from all the events and circumſtances of their common life. No—we find this ſyſtem of doctrines was *gradually* introduced by our Lord, in his different parables and diſcourſes;

diſcourſes; that it appears the apoſtles were ſtrongly prejudiced againſt it, and extremely ſlow to receive, and dull in underſtanding it, but that their gracious Lord gently combated and gradually diſpelled their prejudices, and made way for that more full knowledge of the goſpel ſcheme, which they received by the deſcent of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecoſt; ſtill, however, that part of it which offered moſt violence to their original prejudices, the admiſſion of the Gentiles to the church of Chriſt, was not yet fully and univerſally admitted, but required yet more direct communication and proofs to ſecure its conſtant and cordial reception. Now, does not this proceſs look very unlike the chimerical and unconnected deluſions of fanaticiſm? does it not bear the ſtrongeſt marks of nature and reality?

It ſhould alſo be remembered, that as we find the moſt myſterious doctrines of the goſpel are intermingled and connected with the facts of the hiſtory, and form part of our Lord's parables and diſcourſes, ſo they are alſo perpetually interwoven in the epiſtles of St. Paul, and the other apoſtles, which, in their general ſtyle and ſtructure, are ſo natural and rational, ſo exactly adapted to the character and ſituation of the perſons by whom they were compoſed, as well as of thoſe to whom they were addreſſed, as to bear the plaineſt marks of truth and ſoberneſs; and can we believe this of the moral and hiſtorical parts of the New Teſtament, and yet ſuppoſe that the doctrinal

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parts of the very ſame hiſtories and epiſtles are the effuſions of wild fanaticiſm? ſurely this were utterly incredible.

The *language* and the *temper* in which even the moſt myſtrious doctrines of the goſpel are conveyed, is alſo totally different from that which we univerſally find diſtinguiſhes the compoſitions of enthuſiaſts. In the inſtructions of the apoſtles we find all is moderate though earneſt, and though dignified not proud; they betray no marks of their conceiving themſelves exalted above all mankind, becauſe they were the only human beings whom the Divinity vouchſafed to enlighten with theſe myſterious truths. The apoſtles rather ſeem to reflect on their ſituation with ſelf-abaſement, and aweful apprehenſion, as entruſted with the miniſtry of the word, for the right diſcharge of which they would be called to anſwer before the tribunal of their Lord. This is the idea conſtantly predominant in their minds;—"[z] Though I preach the goſpel (ſays "St. Paul) I have nothing to glory of, for neceſſity "is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me if I preach "not the goſpel; for if I do this thing willingly I "have a reward; but if againſt my will, a diſpenſa-"tion of the goſpel is committed unto me—what "is my reward then? verily, that when I preach "the goſpel I may make the goſpel of Chriſt "without charge (i. e. *without receiving any "pecuniary recompence from thoſe to whom I preach*)

[z] 1 Cor. ix. 16.

"that

" that I abuſe not my power in the goſpel." Here we ſee the warmth and diſintereſtedneſs of ſincerity; but do we not alſo ſee a humility utterly remote from fanaticiſm: thus again ſpeaking of the reſurrection of Chriſt; " [h] laſt of all he was ſeen of " me alſo, as of one born out of due time; for I am " the leaſt of the apoſtles, who am not worthy to " be called an apoſtle, becauſe I perſecuted the " church of God; but by the grace of God I am " what I am, and his grace, which was beſtowed " upon me, was not in vain; but I laboured more " abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace " of God which was with me."

St. Peter alſo, when addreſſing an exhortation to the miniſters of the Chriſtian church, and deſigning to appriſe them of the full dignity of their office, as an incitement to greater activity, writes thus:— " [i] The elders which are among you I exhort, who " alſo am an elder, and a witneſs of the ſufferings of " Chriſt, and alſo a partaker of the glory which ſhall " be revealed: feed the flock of Chriſt which is " among you, taking the overſight thereof, not by " conſtraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but " of a ready mind; neither as being lords over " God's heritage, but being enſamples to the flock; " and when the chief ſhepherd ſhall appear, ye ſhall " receive a crown of glory which fadeth not away."

[h] 1 Cor. xv. 8. [i] 1 Peter v. 1, &c.

Here

Here is a due ſenſe of the dignity of the miniſterial character, and the reward which will attend its faithful diſcharge; but ſurely this is combined, not only with ſuch diſintereſtedneſs as precludes all ſuſpicion of deceit, but with ſuch humility and calmneſs as is entirely free from the pride and the extravagance of fanaticiſm.

Finally, if we compare the writings of the apoſtles, even ſuch parts of them as frequently and ſtrongly inculcate the moſt myſterious doctrines of the goſpel, with the compoſitions of thoſe fanatics, who in after ages corrupted and diſgraced Chriſtianity, nothing is more ſtriking than the *wide difference in manner*, even where the ſame doctrines form the ſubject of both. In the one, what calmneſs, what dignity, what humility, what charity, to thoſe who differ from them—what earneſt zeal to promote virtue and brotherly love; in the other, what heat and extravagance, what ſelf-exaltation and bitterneſs, what direct condemnation of all who deny or even diſpute their imperious dogmas. In a word, how plainly does the one prove itſelf the offspring of that wiſdom which "deſcended from above, which is full of mercy and "good fruits;" while the other betrays the influence of ſpiritual deluſion working on ſpiritual pride, and diſplaying in its effects foul marks of the earthly and corrupted ſource from whence it ſprings.

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CONCLUSION.

WE have now examined the various circumſtances which would have detected the influence of enthuſiaſm in the firſt teachers of Chriſtianity, if it had in any degree exiſted; and it has, I truſt, appeared that they were totally exempt from its dominion. The FACTS which determined them to follow their Lord during his life, and after his death to maintain his reſurrection and divinity, were ſo plain and certain, ſo contrary to their original expectations, and received with ſuch ſlowneſs and caution, as fully exempt the apoſtles from all ſuſpicion of being the dupes of deluſion and credulity. We have alſo ſeen that the miracles which they wrought to convert men to the belief of the goſpel were ſo great and unqueſtionable, the proofs they employed ſo juſt and conſiſtent, that no fanaticiſm could have gained credit to ſuch facts or ſuggeſted ſuch reaſonings.

And as they were thus evidently free from the two eſſential and leading characters of enthuſiaſm, credulity and dogmatiſm, ſo alſo they betray none of thoſe minuter marks of weakneſs or extravagance which detect that want of diſcretion and ſoberneſs of mind ever attendant on fanaticiſm. Their CONDUCT diſcovers nothing of the melancholy, the auſterity, or the

the abſtraction of enthuſiaſts; nothing of that contempt of order and propriety which ſuch men ever diſplay: all their actions were conſiſtent with reaſon and directed by utility—intrepid and perſevering, but cool and ſteady, in preaching the goſpel, they guarded their ſafety and reputation, as far as was conſiſtent with their ſacred work; if they deſpiſed the favour of man, it was only when they could not obtain it without violating their duty to God; if they chearfully encountered ſhame, and ſuffering, and death, it was to ſecure themſelves, and lead mankind to obtain the rewards of an eternal life.

And as in their private conduct and views they were rational and ſober, in the government of the church they were prudent and cautious, mild and decorous, zealous without violence, and ſteady without obſtinacy; they were ever careful to avoid every occaſion of offence, and prompt to conciliate and concede, as far as conceſſion was juſtifiable, making due allowance for every prejudice, and guarding againſt every cauſe of diſſenſion; they provided wiſely and effectually for the edification and harmony, the rapid ſpread and the permanent ſecurity of the church of Chriſt.

Nor do their WRITINGS breath the ſpirit of ſobriety leſs evidently than their lives. The ſtile of fanatics is ever obſcure, arrogant and violent; the ſtile of the New Teſtament is the very reverſe of this—the hiſtorical

rical writings plain and calm, and unexaggerated, detailing the facts which eſtabliſh the unparalleled perfection of their divine Lord with the particularity and conſiſtency of truth, and the moſt ſignal coolneſs and impartiality; while their epiſtles are in the higheſt degree natural, rational and affectionate, ſuited to the occaſions which produced them, and the relation which the writers bore to the different perſons whom they addreſſed—inſtructing their ignorance and encouraging their virtues—rebuking their offences without bitterneſs—vindicating their own characters from calumny, without betraying any exceſſive reſentment—and maintaining their own authority, as religious inſtructors and guides, without any trace of ſpiritual pride, any arrogant claims to full perfection of virtue.

Next to the ſtile and ſubject matter of their writings, we have examined the nature of the ſeveral *moral precepts* they deliver, and this has appeared moſt ſtrongly contraſted with the errors of fanaticiſm. Men infected with this, ever neglect or corrupt morality; their devotion is gloomy and extravagant—their principles of ſocial conduct unnatural and erroneous—their ideas of perſonal merit and ſelf-regulation wild, harſh and impracticable: the morality of the goſpel is utterly free from all theſe defects, and eminently diſtinguiſhed by the oppoſite excellencies; teaching heart-felt piety to God, without any affecta-

tion of rapturous extacy or extravagant fervor—a piety chaſtened and controuled by diſcretion and humility. We perceive that its juſt pre-eminence is allowed to internal ſincerity, while to outward rites and obſervances their due importance is preſerved; every virtue has its juſt order and value in the Chriſtian ſcheme—every ſocial duty is taught in the cleareſt manner, and enforced by the ſtrongeſt motives—towards our neighbour ſtrict equity and active benevolence is inculcated; while the mind is trained to rational and habitual ſelf-government, founded on piety, promotive of internal purity, and leading by conſtant vigilance to final perfection.

Such is the ſyſtem of Chriſtian morality. Surely ſuch a ſyſtem as this, not only could not have been the offspring of wild, ſenſeleſs fanaticiſm, but ſo far tranſcended all preceding efforts of human reaſon, as well as all natural powers and attainments of its authors, that it can ſcarcely be aſcribed to any ſource but the dictates of divine wiſdom providing for human happineſs.

To this ſyſtem of morality the goſpel adds a ſcheme of ſpeculative doctrines, in which every certain truth of natural religion is maintained in the ſtrongeſt manner, is confirmed by new proofs, and placed in the cleareſt light; and in which all doubts as to our preſent relation to God, and our future expectations, are

are decided exactly in that way which coincides with the opinions of the moſt enlightened reaſon, and beſt promotes the intereſts of virtue aud religion, and this undebaſed by any mixture of thoſe fictions and extravagancies which fanaticiſm would almoſt inevitably have dictated; and even the moſt abſtruſe and myſterious doctrines of the Chriſtian ſcheme do not appear to have been ſuch as were likely to originate in any deluſions of imagination, but rather ſuch as were directly connected with, and evidently grounded on the plain facts of the goſpel hiſtory, and thence clearly ſupported by a divine authority.

It ſhould not be forgotten, that in the courſe of this enquiry many facts and circumſtances have forced on our obſervance the ſincerity and integrity of our Lord and his apoſtles, their compleat freedom from all mercenary and ambitious, all narrow and intereſted views, ſo that it ſeems to be eſtabliſhed beyond controverſy, that they were neither deceivers, nor deceived; and if this is admitted, the facts they atteſt are certainly true, and as certainly Chriſtianity is of divine original.

It deſerves alſo to be noticed, that many circumſtances have accidentally occurred in the courſe of this enquiry confirming, in the ſtrongeſt manner, the genuineneſs and authenticity of the New Teſtament, the particularity and conſiſtency of the goſpels, the references

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Such is the ſyſtem of Chriſtian morality. Surely ſuch a ſyſtem as this, not only could not have been the offspring of wild, ſenſeleſs fanaticiſm, but ſo far tranſcended all preceding efforts of human reaſon, as well as all natural powers and attainments of its authors, that it can ſcarcely be aſcribed to any ſource but the dictates of divine wiſdom providing for human happineſs.

To this ſyſtem of morality the goſpel adds a ſcheme of ſpeculative doctrines, in which every certain truth of natural religion is maintained in the ſtrongeſt manner, is confirmed by new proofs, and placed in the cleareſt light; and in which all doubts as to our preſent relation to God, and our future expectations, are

are decided exactly in that way which coincides with the opinions of the moſt enlightened reaſon, and beſt promotes the intereſts of virtue and religion, and this undebaſed by any mixture of thoſe fictions and extravagancies which fanaticiſm would almoſt inevitably have dictated; and even the moſt abſtruſe and myſterious doctrines of the Chriſtian ſcheme do not appear to have been ſuch as were likely to originate in any deluſions of imagination, but rather ſuch as were directly connected with, and evidently grounded on the plain facts of the goſpel hiſtory, and thence clearly ſupported by a divine authority.

It ſhould not be forgotten, that in the courſe of this enquiry many facts and circumſtances have forced on our obſervance the ſincerity and integrity of our Lord and his apoſtles, their compleat freedom from all mercenary and ambitious, all narrow and intereſted views, ſo that it ſeems to be eſtabliſhed beyond controverſy, that they were neither deceivers, nor deceived; and if this is admitted, the facts they atteſt are certainly true, and as certainly Chriſtianity is of divine original.

It deſerves alſo to be noticed, that many circumſtances have accidentally occurred in the courſe of this enquiry confirming, in the ſtrongeſt manner, the genuineneſs and authenticity of the New Teſtament, the particularity and conſiſtency of the goſpels, the references

references in the epiſtles to private, and local, and domeſtic particulars, their containing anſwers to queſtions and letters coming from the perſons to whom they are addreſſed: theſe and a variety of other particulars, render it almoſt wholly incredible that theſe epiſtles ſhould not have been the writings of the apoſtles whoſe names they bear; and if ſo, the whole ſeries of facts on which Chriſtianity reſts, is eſtabliſhed beyond the poſſibility of doubt.

Indeed the ſuppoſition that the New Teſtament was not genuine and authentic, carries with it inextricable difficulties: whoever were its authors, their ſyſtem of morality proves they were in the higheſt degree pious, honeſt and rational, anxious for the improvement of mankind in purity and virtue, juſtice and benevolence; and how is it poſſible to reconcile with this the idea of their being guilty of the groſſeſt forgery, and impoſing upon the world the moſt atrocious and impious falſehoods as to the divine conduct and divine diſpenſations; leading men to adore a crucified deceiver as the Son of God and Judge of the world?

The true reaſon why men are not ſufficiently impreſſed with the view of the direct evidence of the goſpel is, that they do not ſufficiently reflect on the extreme abſurdities and contradictions they muſt fall into if they deny the force of that evidence; they only

only attend to the objections which they conceive lie againſt the admiſſion of Chriſtianity, but reflect not on the infinitely greater difficulties which attend its rejection; there is no medium between believing the goſpel to be entirely falſe or entirely true; either its authors were what they claim to be, meſſengers from God, or they were the groſſeſt impoſtors, and at the ſame time the wildeſt fanatics that ever appeared in the world; deceivers and fanatics to ſuch a degree as involves a direct contradiction. In truth, on this ſuppoſition every thing is contradiction and perplexity; the improvements on all former ſchemes of morality and religion, which the teachers of the goſpel introduced, are unaccountable—their ſteadineſs in encountering ſhame and perſecution is unaccountable—their ſucceſs in reforming the Jews and Heathens, in overturning that groſs ſyſtem of idolatry, which was ſupported by the people, the prieſts, and the emperors, is unaccountable. Finally, it is wholly unaccountable how fanatics or deceivers ſhould have inſtituted a ſcheme of religion which has ſurvived the ruins of the Roman empire, which, though corrupted and debaſed by the ignorance and ſuperſtition of thoſe dark ages which ſucceeded, carried in itſelf the means of detecting theſe corruptions, and reforming thoſe abuſes: a religion which, though it has been the ſubject of more violent oppoſition, more cloſe inveſtigation, and more acute objection, than the human mind ever has employed on

any

any other ſubject, has yet ſuſtained this fiery trial, and ſtill remains unſhaken and unconfuted:—a religion which inſpires the nobleſt hopes, and ſupports the pureſt virtues that can adorn the human mind, which, ſo far as it has prevailed, has ſoftened the manners and reformed the vices of mankind, and which, whenever it has been neglected, abuſed, or forſaken, has proved its excellence by the very vices and miſeries which have attended, and chaſtiſed ſuch perverſion and apoſtacy.

Such is the religion, whoſe divine original, as I am myſelf from my heart convinced of, I have in the preceding work endeavoured to illuſtrate and defend; and if it is indeed of divine original, it is aſſuredly the firſt duty of every human being, to whoſe acceptance it is offered, to examine it with candid attention, and when ſatisfied of its truth, to receive it with humble reverence—to practice what is plain, and believe what is clearly revealed—to examine with humility, and interpret with caution whatever may appear doubtful and obſcure—to acquieſce in the ignorance of what divine wiſdom has not judged it neceſſary for man clearly to underſtand, but to be careful to improve the inſtructions it has deigned to beſtow.

Thus received, and thus improved, Chriſtianity will calm our paſſions, ſtrengthen our ſelf-government,

ment, exalt our piety, and expand our benevolence; it will prove the never-failing ſource of conſolation and hope, amidſt the changes and chances, the pains and ſorrows of this tranſitory life: in the gloom of death it will open to us the bright proſpects of life and immortality, and ſecure to us from its divine Author, our Redeemer and our Judge, the enjoyment of ſtill encreaſing happineſs through all eternity.

FINIS.

APPENDIX.

THIS Appendix is intended chiefly for the uſe of my younger readers, to point out ſome references which may guide them to more full information on points touched on in the preceding work, a particular detail of which the nature of its principal ſubject did not ſeem to require. It alſo contains ſome remarks which either have occurred ſince the preceding ſheets were printed, or which were not ſo cloſely connected with the ſubject of the eſſay, as to admit of their being inſerted in the text.

Note on page 8.—"He had practiſed no religious "auſterity to excite veneration."

It may perhaps be objected, that though our Lord had not done this, yet John the Baptiſt, his forerunner, had. But in proof that this oppoſition in their external characters, far from ſupplying any juſt ſuſpicion of colluſion or deceit, confirms very ſtrongly the truth of the claims of both to a divine authority, vid. Bell's Divine Miſſion of John the Baptiſt and Jeſus Chriſt, part 3, ſect. 2, p. 245, of the ſecond edition. The whole of this work is well worthy the attention of the ſerious enquirer.

"Obſervations on our Lord's requiring faith be-"fore he performed his miracles, on his deſiring "them to be concealed, and his refuſing a ſign to "the Phariſees, &c."—Vid. ſupra, p. 15.

"In every inſtance, when we find ſuch faith required, it is "plain from the hiſtory, that the perſon of whom it was re-

" quired, muſt have had opportunities of being fully aſſured " of our Lord's ſupernatural power and gracious mercy in ex- " erting it." This requires particular proof. The firſt inſtance in which we find faith at all required, before our Lord performed the miracle implored of him, occurs in John, 4th chapter, 48th verſe, when he returned from the feaſt of the paſſover, at which " many believed on his name, beholding " the miracles which he did," to Cana of Galilee, which had been the ſcene of his firſt miracle, and the inhabitants of which " received him, having ſeen all things which he had done in " Jeruſalem at the feaſt." Here a nobleman, whoſe ſon lay ſick at Capernaum, applied to him " to come down and " heal his ſon, for he was at the point of death." Our Lord anſwers, " exeept ye ſee ſigns and wonders ye will not believe." And the nobleman's reply proves that his application proceeded rather from an anxious hope that he, by whom he had ſeen or heard ſuch miracles were wrought, might perhaps have power to reſcue the object of his affections from impending death, than from ſuch firm confidence as the experience of paſt miracles ought to have excited in a candid mind. His words are remarkable; he neither aſſerts the firmneſs of his faith, nor confeſſes or deplores his want of it, but repeats his requeſt with increaſing urgency, " Lord come down ere my child die," fearing, as it ſeems, that to recall him from death our Lord's power extended not. Jeſus chooſes that mode of performing the miracle which ſhould moſt decidedly ſhew theſe doubts were not incorrigible. Inſtead of accompanying him to ſee his ſon, as he had deſired, he ſays, " go thy way, thy ſon " liveth; and the man believed and went his way, and that " very hour the fever left his ſon." Do not theſe circumſtances clearly point out the propriety of our Lord's noticing, with ſome degree of cenſure, his previous weakneſs of faith?

An inſtance in which the want of faith was cenſured, was in the apoſtles themſelves, when our Lord was * aſleep in the ſhip with them, and a ſtorm filled them with exceſſive terror. Now, ſurely they who had been a great length of time witneſſes of his miracles (for this was after the ſecond paſſover

* Vid. Matt. viii. 24. Mark iv. 38.

in

in our Lord's miniſtry) ought not to have entertained any ſuch fears.

Another inſtance of our Lord's requiring faith was in Jairus, one of the rulers of the ſynagogue at Capernaum, who applied to him to heal his daughter who was dying. He muſt have ſeen many inſtances of our Lord's power in Capernaum, the frequent reſidence of our Lord; and at that very hour, when our Lord was going to his houſe, he healed a woman of an inveterate iſſue of blood; and it is remarkable, that a meſſage had been ſent to Jairus, implying a diſtruſt of our Lord's power, for one came from the ruler of the ſynagogue's houſe, ſaying to him "* thy daughter is dead, why troubleſt thou "the Maſter?" On this meſſage it was that Jeſus anſwered the ruler, ſaying, "fear not, only believe, and ſhe ſhall be "made whole." This was a gracious encouragement, not an unreaſonable requiſition. Very ſoon after this reſurrection was noiſed abroad, † two blind men applied to be healed, and of them alſo our Lord demands, "believe ye that I am able to "do this." They alſo had previous opportunities of being convinced of the divine power of Jeſus.

Another inſtance occurs in the ‡ Syro-Phœnician woman, who, though a Gentile, applied to him on hearing of his miraraculous power. Our Lord put her faith to the ſevereſt teſt, but the deſign of this was evidently to convince the prejudiced Jews that the Heathens might be much more worthy of enjoying the benefits of his favour than themſelves.

Another inſtance was, when his diſciples failed in curing a § child, whoſe father had implored their interference. The afflicted parent, almoſt in deſpair, applied to our Lord, "if "thou canſt do any thing, have compaſſion on us, and help us." Jeſus ſaid unto him, "if thou canſt believe, all things are poſ-"ſible unto him that believeth; and ſtraightway the father of "the child cried out and ſaid, with tears, Lord, I believe, "help thou mine unbelief." This ſurely was as gracious as it was dignified, on the part of our Lord.

* Mark v. 22, to the end. Newcome's Harmony, ſect. 52.
† Vid. Matt. ix. 27—31. Newcome's Harmony, ſect. 53.
‡ Matt. xv. 22—28. Mark vii. 24—30.
§ Vid. Matt. xvii. 24. Mark ix. 14. Luke ix. 37.

Finally, in all inſtances when faith was required, it was from thoſe who deliberately and voluntarily applied to our Lord. Now, if ſuch applications proceeded from idle curioſity, or inſincere hearts, ought they to have been complied with? was not therefore an avowal of their ſincere faith natural and reaſonable, before our Lord would exert his divine power in their behalf.

The real motive of our Lord in withholding his miracles, we ſhall be inſtructed in, by obſerving, that the inhabitants of Nazareth, amongſt whom our Lord did not perform many miracles, were of diſpoſitions ſo ſelfiſh, proud and malignant, that on his appealing to the practice of the prophets, to juſtify his exerciſing his power for the benefit of thoſe who were not of his own country, they were "filled with wrath," and made an attempt on his life, to eſcape from which he exerciſed a ſupernatural power; "for they * led him to the brow of the hill, on "which their city was built, to caſt him down headlong, but he "paſſing through the midſt of them, went his way:"—doubtleſs by rendering himſelf inviſible. Thus they received a proof of his power in ſuch a way as they merited, not by his indulging their curioſity or their pride, bnt by expoſing and defeating their obſtinate ſelfiſhneſs, and baſe malignity.

The prieſts and Phariſees, to whom our Lord refuſed the ſign they ſought, were of ſuch diſpoſitions, that † they had immediately before imputed his miracles to the operation of Satan, and long after, when they were informed of the awful reſurrection of Lazarus, and the multitude who believed on our Lord in conſequence, far from being convinced, they were only the more enraged, "they took counſel to put him to "death," and not only our Lord, but Lazarus himſelf, "be-"cauſe, that by reaſon of him many of the Jews went away, "and believed upon Jeſus." Herod alſo, who was glad to ſee our Lord at his laſt trial, "hoping to ſee ſome miracle done "by him," was that ſame Herod, who had murdered John the Baptiſt, and who continued to live in that ſtate of inceſtand adultery, by rebuking him for which the Baptiſt had incurred his reſentment. Such were the characters in whom our Lord did not

* Luke iv. 29. † Vid. Matt. xii. and John xi 47.

find

find ſuch diſpoſitions, as induced him to work miracles for their particular advantage or conviction; and is this wonderful?

For a full account of the reaſons for our Lord's *concealing* his miracles, conſult Primate Newcome's Obſervations on his Conduct and Character, part 1, chap. iii. ſect. 3. Whence it appears he concealed them only from the Jews, and from them only, when urged by the moſt weighty motives, when they had immediately before attempted his life, or when they had attempted to take him by force and make him a king; or imputed his miracles to Satan; or that the reality of the miracle might be judicially aſcertained by an impartial examination of it, as in the * caſe of the lepers; or when it was neceſſary to avoid giving occaſion for tumults, or to prevent individuals from being perſecuted in conſequence of receiving his miraculous aid. —Vide alſo Randolph's Chriſtian's Faith a Rational Aſſent. p. 166 to 172.

P. 22. "The ſea of Galilee."

For the principal cauſe why the country about this ſea became ſo much the ſcene of our Lord's reſidence, ſee Matt. iv. 13.—In proof that the miracles and conduct of our Lord were ſubmitted to a full and public ſcrutiny, from the extreme populouſneſs of the country, and the number of large towns and villages it contained, vid. Dr. Macknight's Harmony of the Goſpels, vol. 2, p. 100, of the 2d edit. in his comment on the above paſſage of Matthew.—Vid. Joſephus de Bello Judaico, lib. 3, chap. iii. ſect. 2. in atteſtation of the great populouſneſs of the country.

P. 27.—"Remarks on the cure of the man born "blind, and ſome other miracles."

In the cure of the man born blind it is related, that Jeſus "† ſpat on the ground, and made clay of the ſpittle, and he "anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay, and ſaid "unto him, go waſh in the pool of Siloam (which is by in-"terpretation ſent); he went his way therefore and waſhed, "and came ſeeing." On this unbelievers object that this

* Vid. Luke v. 12, 14. † John ix. 1—7.

proceſs,

proceſs, if it was neceſſary to the cure, looks like the application of ſome hidden means of art. If unneceſſary, they arraign it as in the mode improper, and even ridiculous.

In proof that no hidden means of art could have effected this cure, ſince no ſuch means could have *wrought a miracle on the mind*, ſo as inſtantaneouſly to infuſe that power of uſing the organs of ſight, and judging by them of external objects—a power which *experience* only can ſupply, and which a man born blind could not poſſeſs, conſult Dr. Elrington's Sermons on Miracles, from p. 115 to 128—and Dr. Drought's Comment on the Account of the gradual Cure related by St. Mark, in the Appendix to the ſame work, p. 263. It remains to examine whether we can diſcover any *propriety* in this *mode* of performing the miracle. To judge of this we may obſerve, that the only inſtances beſides this, in which our Lord is repreſented as uſing any external application whatſoever, or curing by any means except a word, or the touch of his finger, or his garment, are the following—

" * Another blind man, near Bethſaida, whom they brought " unto him, and beſought him to touch him; and he took the " blind man by the hand, and led him out of the town, and " when he had ſpit on his eyes, and put his hands upon him, " he aſked him, if he ſaw ought? and he looked up and ſaid, " I ſee men as trees walking. After that he put his hands " again upon his eyes, and made him look up, and he was re- " ſtored, and he ſaw every man clearly; and he ſent him away " to his own houſe, ſaying, neither go into the town, nor tell " it to any in the town"—

And ſomewhat a ſimilar mode did our Lord adopt in the caſe of a man, " whom they brought † unto him, (near the " ſea of Galilee) who was deaf, and had an impediment " in his ſpeech, and they beſeech him to put his hands upon " him; and he took him aſide from the multitude, and put his " fingers into his ears, and he ſpit and touched his tongue, and, " looking up to heaven, he ſighed, and ſaith unto him, " Ephphatha, that is, be opened, and ſtraightway his ears " were opened, and the ſtring of his tongue was looſed, and " he ſpeak plain; and he charged them that they ſhould tell no

* Mark viii. 23—26. † Mark vii. 32—37.

" man;

" man; but the more he charged them, ſo much the more a " great deal they publiſhed it, and were beyond meaſure " aſtoniſhed, ſaying, he hath done all things well, he maketh " both the deaf to hear, and the dumb to ſpeak."

Theſe three are the only inſtances where a *deliberate external application* is related to have been uſed, and in all theſe caſes the reaſon for uſing it ſeems to have been *one and the ſame, even to convey to the individuals, on whom the miracles were performed, a clear aſſurance that Jeſus was the perſon at whoſe command, and by whoſe agency the cure was wrought, and to enable them to ſtate to others the grounds of this aſſurance fully and circumſtantially.*

For this purpoſe our Saviour uſed ſuch a mode of application as was beſt calculated to make an impreſſion on the ſenſes theſe men poſſeſſed, unimpaired, antecedent to the miracle, and ſuch as led them to obſerve, that he was about to interpoſe, in order to perfect thoſe organs which were defective. A little attention will ſhew that every circumſtance in the different modes of application had this tendency.

A blind man can know another only by the voice or the touch. The blind man near Bethſaida our Lord led out of the town remote from the crowd, that he might be ſure of the perſon who ſpoke to or touched him; he then ſpat on his eyes, and laid his hands on him, and reſtored him to ſight, though imperfectly—after that he put his hands again upon his eyes, and he ſaw clearly. What poſſible mode could give him a more full aſſurance that the cure was wrought by the interpoſition of an external agent, and that Jeſus was that agent. The deaf man could judge of the intentions of another only by ſeeing what he does, him therefore our Lord took aſide from the multitude, that he might fix and confine his attention to himſelf, and then he put his fingers into his ears, and touched his tongue, thus ſignifying to him that he intended to produce ſome change in theſe organs; he then looked up to heaven, at the ſame time ſpeaking, to ſignify the change would proceed from a divine power, exerciſed at his interpoſition.

The very ſame purpoſe was equally anſwered by our Lord's application to the eyes of the man born blind; it aſſured him that the perſon who came cloſe to him, and ſpoke to him, and anointed his eyes, was the ſole agent, by whoſe interpoſition the

the cure was wrought. Immediately, on approaching our Saviour, after receiving his ſight, he muſt have recognized him by his voice. Had the grounds of his aſſurance been leſs full and circumſtantial, he never could have ſo unanſwerably ſilenced the objections, and replied, to the captious queries of the Phariſees—" What did he do to thee? how opened he thine " eyes?—He anſwered, and ſaid, " a man that is called Jeſus " made clay, and anointed mine eyes, and ſaid unto me, go to " the pool of Siloam, and waſh, and I went and waſhed, and " I received ſight."

We may be confirmed in believing this to have been the deſign of theſe external applications, by obſerving, that they were uſed in no inſtance except thoſe of blindneſs and deafneſs, when a defect of the ſenſes rendered them neceſſary to convey ſuch aſſurance of Jeſus having been the author of the miracle. And ſtill more, by obſerving that it does not appear that any of theſe three men had any previous knowledge of our Saviour's power and character. The man born blind he healed without any ſolicitation. The blind man at Bethſaida, and the deaf man, do not appear to have come of themſelves, they were brought by their friends; more precaution was therefore neceſſary to call their attention to the perſon by whom the miracle was wrought, and give them full evidence that it was his ſole work. When the two blind men at Capernaum, and two others near Jericho, applied to our Saviour to be healed, it was with a declared previous conviction of his divine power, they followed him, crying, " Son of David have mercy upon us." Here therefore a leſs remarkable external application was ſufficient, as they profeſſed their belief; Jeſus only required that this profeſſion ſhould be ſincere. " Believe ye, ſaid he, that I " have the power to do this? and they ſaid, yea Lord: then he " touched their eyes, ſaying, according to your faith be it unto " you; and their eyes were opened."

If theſe remarks are juſt, they exhibit one of thoſe numberleſs caſes, where incidents apparently minute and objectionable, when well conſidered, diſplay the miraculous nature of the facts, and the admirable propriety of our Lord's conduct in every circumſtance; and every ſuch inſtance confirms ſtrongly the concluſion, that our Lord's miracles were not deluſive viſions, or the extravagancies of a wild and ſenſeleſs fanatic, but plain

plain proofs of a divine power, exhibited with the ſobriety and dignity becoming his divine character. This their cloſe connection with the ſubject of the foregoing diſcourſe will, it is hoped, apologize for the length to which theſe remarks have extended.

P. 44.—" They had been choſen as peculiar wit-
" neſſes of the reſurrection of their Lord."

Mr. Paine having revived this objection, of our Lord's not appearing publicly to all the Jews, and ſtated it as unanſwerable, I wiſh briefly to obſerve that the apoſtles were ſurely the beſt poſſible witneſſes; they were perfectly familiar with him, and could not be deceived as to his identity; they ſacrificed every temporal intereſt in confirming their teſtimony, and muſt have been ſincere; but yet their teſtimony has been ſometimes ſet aſide as nugatory, becauſe our Lord did not appear publicly to all the Jews; that is, *ſufficient* evidence is rejected becauſe we are not gratified with evidence of a quite different nature. But had our Lord appeared publicly, let us for a moment conſider what would probably have been the effect? The Jews ſaw Lazarus publicly raiſed, yet they were not convinced; they were not influenced by our Lord's multiplied miracles, becauſe he did not appear as a temporal Meſſiah. Had this diſpoſition remained, either they would have rejected our Lord, though convinced of his reſurrection, and their rejection would have been cited as evidence directly contradictory to that of the apoſtles; or if they received him, it would have been as a temporal Redeemer, and this would have been imputed to temporal motives, to the artifice of the rulers, and the national prejudices of the people favouring the views of a political deceiver. Or if we take a third ſuppoſition, and ſuppoſe the whole nation to have received Jeſus in his true character of a ſpiritual Redeemer, yet here alſo their aſſent would be imputed to national pride, flattered by being the authors of an univerſal religion. We would have no proof of the reality of the miracles wrought by our Lord, and his apoſtles, becauſe they would have undergone no ſcrutiny, ſince all the ſpectators would have been friends. We would have no certainty that the prophecies were not altered to accommodate

commodate them to events which that nation, the principal depoſitary of theſe predictions, univerſally wiſhed to perſuade mankind formed their accompliſhment, and we ſhould loſe the chief proof of the diſintereſtedneſs and ſteadineſs of the apoſtles' teſtimony; for they would have had the whole body of the nation to ſupport their pretenſions to the high rank of divine teachers, and to guard them from the hazard of perſecution, or conſole them by ſharing their martyrdom as the glory of their race. How truly may we here apply what my learned friend already quoted has advanced on another ſimilar argument. "When will the failure of every attempt at con-" triving a ſyſtem of evidence, better adapted to the ſupport of " Chriſtianity than that on which it reſts, convince its adverſa-" ries that it derives its origin from more than human wiſdom?" Elrington's Sermons, p. 185. Vide, on this ſubject, Randolph's Chriſtian Faith a Rational Aſſent, from p. 173 to 178. The Trial of the Witneſſes, p. 76 to 82. Sequel to the Trial, p. 136. Macknight's Harmony, ſect. 158. The Commentators on Acts x. 41, particularly Dodd's uſeful Compilation. If the reader wiſhes to conſult more authors on this ſubject, he will find them enumerated in Doddridge's Lectures, part 6, prop. 108, Schol. 1, p. 471 of the 1ſt vol. of Dr. Kippis's edition.

For anſwers to objections againſt the reſurrection, from our Lord's ſeeming to appear or diſappear ſuddenly, &c. as in Luke xxiv. 16—31 and 36. John xx. 17—19 and 26, conſult Weſt on the Reſurrection, p. 140 to 147, 3d Dublin edition—and the Commentators on theſe paſſages.

To reconcile the apparent diſcrepancies in the accounts of the evangeliſts, concerning the reſurrection, conſult the Harmony of Dr. Benſon, adopted and confirmed by Primate Newcome, in his Review of Difficulties concerning the reſurrection.

Weſt, Lardner, Townſon, and many others, have written largely on this ſubject; let me add the name of a ſtudent of this Univerſity, Thomas Cranfield, A. B. who, in 1795, publiſhed a ſenſible tract on this ſubject.

P. 47.

P. 47.—" The converſion of St. Paul."

Lord Lyttleton has treated the fact of St. Paul's own converſion fully, and has proved ſo clearly, it could not be accounted for, on the ſuppoſition, either of fraud or fanaticiſm, that I have not dwelt on this fact in particular; I only quote ſuch of his arguments as illuſtrate the general nature of the evidence, which the miracles of the apoſtles ſupplied. Vid. Littleton's Converſion of St. Paul, p. 55.

P. 49.—" Give directions for their more orderly " uſe in their aſſemblies."

For a full account of the nature of the ſpiritual gifts of the firſt converts, their neceſſity and their certainty, conſult the Eſſay on the Teaching and Witneſs of the Holy Spirit, in Lord Barrington's Miſcellanea Sacra, vol. 1ſt. re-printed by Biſhop Watſon, in the 4th vol. of his Theological Tracts. Vide particularly from p. 375 to 413, and 436 to 454.

The great difficulty and importance of this ſubject prevents me from attempting to give any abridgement of this excellent eſſay, which I ſtrongly recommend to every ſerious enquirer. One paſſage I will quote, for the purpoſe of adducing a remark on it more peculiarly connected with my preſent ſubject. Lord Barrington * diſtinguiſhes, I think very juſtly, " the " working of miracles, healing diſeaſes, and caſting out devils, " from thoſe which were more ſtrictly termed, *gifts of the Holy* " *Ghoſt*, which St. Paul ſums up under the heads of know- " ledge and utterance. But though † I apprehend, ſays he, " all the gifts of the Holy Ghoſt in their ſtrict acceptation, or " the gifts that were peculiar to the diſpenſation of the ſpirit " conſiſted in illumination, yet I apprehend that that illumina- " tion was of two kinds; the one was an illumination of ſuch " a nature as conveyed a ſyſtem, an art, or ſkill; the other was " an illumination in a particular inſtance, *pro re nata*, and that " only ſerved the preſent purpoſe and occaſion."

This diſtinction ſeems to me exceedingly juſt, as well as extremely important. ‡ I conceive with Lord Barrington, that the power of healing diſeaſes, and caſting out devils, was, in the

* Vid. Watſon's Tracts, vol. 4, p. 400 to 404.

† Vid. Lord Barrington, p. 406. ‡ Ibid. 402.

apoſtles,

apoſtles of this latter kind, occaſional and temporary, to the exerciſe of which they were directed by the ſame divine impulſe, which at the moment gave them the power to exerciſe it. Of this we have many proofs in the New Teſtament. The gift of healing, for inſtance, was not exerciſed by the apoſtles at will; for if ſo, we can hardly ſuppoſe that St. Paul would not have employed it for the advantage of Timothy, who laboured under "* *many infirmities*;" or of "*Trophimus, whom he left at Mi-*" *letus ſick*;" and that he was equally limited in the power of foreſeeing or predicting future events, is proved in this work, chap. ii. ſect. 3, p. 75 to 78. But the gift of tongues, of the interpretation of tongues, of knowledge, of wiſdom, of prayer, of thoſe gifts ſuited to the apoſtles, evangeliſts, teachers, preſbyters, deacons, and other ſtated offices in the church of Chriſt, when communicated, *were permanent*. Now, if we admit this diſtinction, we ſhall, as it ſeems to me, perceive that the *diſorderly uſe of ſpiritual gifts*, which is ſaid to have taken place in the religious aſſemblies of the Corinthian church, *is perfectly conſiſtent with their ſupernatural original*. The gift of healing could not be abuſed, nor that of inflicting miraculous puniſhment, which the apoſtles on ſome occaſions exerciſed, becauſe the particular inſtance and mode in which they were exerciſed, were determined by the very ſame divine impulſe, which communicated the power to perform theſe miracles. With the gift of prophecy it was otherwiſe, becauſe though the foreknowledge of a future event was ſupernaturally communicated; yet when the knowledge was infuſed into the mind of the prophet, he was ſtill a free agent as to the ſeaſon and mode of communicating that knowledge to others. "† The ſpirits of the "prophets (ſays St. Paul) ‡are ſubject to the prophets; for God "is not the author of confuſion, but peace in the churches"—that is, the prophets are not mere machines to proclaim the dictates of inſpiration, for this would reſemble the effects of fanatical delirium and convulſions, but free agents, able to ſelect the occaſion and mode of communicating the ſupernatural knowledge they poſſeſſed ſoberly and orderly; but as men were

* 1 Tim. v. 23. 2 Tim. iv. 20. † 1 Cor. xiv. 32.

‡ The obſervation of St. Paul in this paſſage applies to *teachers*, which the original ſignifies, but it is not the leſs important in our preſent argument.

not

not rendered infallible or impeccable, by poſſeſſing prophetic knowledge, they may be conceived to be led away by impatience, or even by oſtentation, to chooſe an unſeaſonable time or manner of communicating it, though in whatever manner communicated, it could not fail of appearing ſupernatural, and therefore of evincing the divine original of that religion, to eſtabliſh which it was employed. What is here obſerved of prophecy, is much more obviouſly true of other ſpiritual gifts of a more permanent, and, if I may expreſs it ſo, of a more independent nature. The perſon to whom the knowledge of a new language was ſupernaturally communicated, muſt be conceived to employ this knowledge, without being in every particular inſtance of his doing ſo, ſupernaturally or forcibly over-ruled, and therefore may be conceived to have employed it in an unſeaſonable or irregular manner; ſtill, however, it would on the whole facilitate the diffuſion, and prove the divine original of the goſpel. St. Paul ſeems, in his addreſs to the Corinthians on this ſubject, to diſtinguiſh clearly between the perfection of morals, piety and wiſdom, and the poſſeſſion of ſpiritual gifts, and to repreſent humility, ſelf-government and vigilance, as neceſſary to the religious improvement and final ſalvation, even of thoſe who were endowed with ſpiritual gifts of the moſt exalted and wonderful kind. Hence he * exhorts thoſe who were ſo endowed, "not to be puffed up, not to contend with each other for pre-eminence; he exhorts them to "prefer charity to all, &c." Such is the view which the ſcripture exhibits to us of theſe gifts, which had, indeed, God for their author, but were diſpenſed through the medium of men, who could not but remain liable to ſin and error.

Is not this repreſentation equally free from the falſehood of hypocriſy, which would conceal the errors and failings it could not but perceive, and from the blind preſumption of fanaticiſm, which would not perceive any ſuch errors or failings to exiſt? Does it not bear the plaineſt characters of truth and nature, and add one to thoſe numberleſs inſtances of circumſtances which, at firſt ſight, appear ſtrongly objectionable, but which, on a cloſer view, are found to prove confirmations of the the truth and divinity of the goſpel ſcheme?

* Vid. 1 Cor. xii. xiii. xiv.

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If the reader wiſhes for further information on this ſubject, he may conſult Warburton's Doctrine of Grace, the five firſt chapters. Dr. Samuel Chandler's Sermons, vol. 1, Sermons 12th, 13th, and 14th, on the Deſcent of the Holy Spirit, &c. and Leland's Anſwer to Morgan, chap. 13th.

"Obſervations on the community of goods, and "the deaths of Ananias and Sapphira."

It may be ſatisfactory to my younger readers to preſent them the following remarks, on the community of goods amongſt the firſt Chriſtians at Jeruſalem, collected from ſome of the beſt commentators.

There ſeems to have been peculiar reaſons which made this community of goods eligible at that time in Jeruſalem. There were many ſtrangers, who had come from great diſtances to the feaſt of Pentecoſt, and who would naturally be deſirous to continue there much longer than they originally intended, in order to gain a thorough knowledge of the goſpel, which they had recently embraced; theſe would have a ſtrong claim on the pious generoſity of their fellow Chriſtians, who were inhabitants of Jeruſalem.

The apoſtles, and all the Chriſtians, knew that Jeſus had foretold the deſtruction of Jeruſalem would take place before that generation was paſſed away; and therefore they may have thought it proper, while there was an opportunity, to improve to the beſt uſe their eſtates, which they could not long enjoy, by relieving their poorer brethren, and by enabling the firſt teachers to purſue their travels from place to place.

Many alſo of the apoſtles, and others, who (like Barnabas) reſolved to devote their whole future lives to preaching the goſpel, would not want, in the execution of this taſk, more than the immediate neceſſaries of life, and would naturally devote their property to the ſame cauſe. And indeed they could but ill attend to the care of any property, while travelling and preaching to diſſeminate the goſpel.

This ſurrender of the goods of each individaal to the common ſtock, was wholly unconſtrained. What St. Peter ſays to Ananias was true of all;—"while the land remained, was it "not thine own? and after it was ſold, was it not in thine own "power?"

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They who gave up their goods had a right to claim ſupport from the common ſtock. "Diſtribution was made unto every "man, as he had need." The number of believers at Jeruſalem was ſo great, that the ſhare of each would be inconſiderable, much too inconſiderable to induce the leaſt ſuſpicion, that converts could be allured by it; and it ſhould not be forgot, that if this community of goods had been made a *condition* of *Chriſtianity*, it would effectually deter the rich, and thus defeat itſelf.

It is beyond doubt this practice was never recommended for general adoption by any of the apoſtles. Bounty to the poor, and a juſt attention to the wants of the miniſters of the goſpel, are frequently inculcated, particularly by St. Paul, who yet ſeems never to have uſed any ſupply of this kind, when he could poſſibly ſubſiſt by his own labour; for when he moſt ſtrongly enforces this right, in 1 Cor. ix. he has this remarkable appeal—"even ſo hath the Lord ordained, that "they which preach the goſpel, ſhould live of the goſpel; but "I have uſed none of theſe things, neither have I written theſe "things, that it ſhould be ſo done unto me; for it were better "for me to die, than that any man ſhould make my glorying "void; for though I preach the goſpel, I have nothing to "glory of, for neceſſity is laid upon me—yea, woe is unto me "if I preach not the goſpel, for if I do this thing willingly I "have my reward; but, if againſt my will, a diſpenſation of "the goſpel is committed to me; what is my reward then? "Verily, that when I preach the goſpel, I may make the goſ-"pel of Chriſt without charge, that I abuſe not my power in "the goſpel." I might aſk, is not this equally remote from enthuſiaſm and impoſture? Would an enthuſiaſt thus juſtify in others a principle which he would not carry into practice himſelf? or, would an impoſtor fail to carry ſuch a principle into practice?

I cannot avoid thinking that ſcarce any but perverted minds, could harbour a ſuſpicion againſt the apoſtles, on account of this circumſtance. They all lived a life of poverty, toil and danger, and many of them died a death of torture, in order to teach the moſt exalted piety, and moſt diſintereſted virtue; and ſhall we ſuſpect them of being intereſted men, becauſe for ſome time they preſided over the diſtribution of a charitable fund, which they

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very ſoon refuſed to do, alledging that it took up too much of their time from preaching the goſpel; and commanded the ſociety to nominate other perſons to manage it. What grounds are here for ſuſpicion.

This community of goods is one of the many facts which are moſt unaccountable, if the miraculous part of the relation is falſe, moſt natural if this be true. What but the plain notoriety of theſe miracles could have ſuch an influence on the richeſt, and therefore the moſt enlightened proſelytes? In a ſyſtem of cunning and deceit, is it likely this deſcription of men would be the firſt and greateſt dupes, and the ignorant multitude the firſt to profit by the deceit?

But if we admit the truth of the hiſtory, all is natural; the rapid ſucceſſion of amazing diſcoveries and ſtupendous miracles; the full and ſenſible aſſurance of a future life and judgment; would ſo overpower men's minds, as to render all the concerns of this life inſignificant in their eſtimation, and would naturally produce the effect deſcribed in the Acts, which would be infinitely leſs likely to take place at any other ſtage of the promulgation of the goſpel, becauſe Jeruſalem was the ſcene where all the miracles of our Lord had been recently wrought, which would thus at once ruſh into the recollection of the new converts, who were themſelves witneſſes of the wonderful effuſion of the ſpirit with moſt manifeſt demonſtration of divine power. In ſuch an unprecedented ſituation, it is not ſurely to be wondered at, that men's minds ſhould be worked up to an unprecedented degree of religious zeal and mutual benevolence. In other places the evidence of the goſpel was exhibited more gradually, and the effects, though every where great, were alſo gradual.

To thoſe who demand a reſiſtleſs evidence, as the only one worthy of a divine revelation, I would obſerve, with the acute and judicious Paley (Evidence of Chriſtianity, chap. vi. ſect. 3, p. 626, Dublin edit. 1795,) that we ſee deſcribed in this paſſage of ſcripture what the natural effect of ſuch a degree of evidence probably muſt be, and that if this ſtate of mind were univerſal, or long continued, the buſineſs of this world could not go on. This was however a noble inſtance of that diſintereſtedneſs, ſelf-denial, and benevolence, which the goſpel was deſigned to produce in theminds of men, and which is carefully

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to be cultivated by ſuch as profeſs themſelves the diſciples of Jeſus, in every age and nation, though all are not obliged to exert it in the ſame manner or degree.

Another event connected with this community of goods, on which it may be neceſſary to make ſome remarks, is the puniſhment of Ananias and Sapphira, Acts v. Their crime then ſeems to have conſiſted (vid. ſupra) not in with-holding part of the price of the land, for the whole of this "was in their "own power;" but in bringing part of the price, and falſely aſſerting that they had brought the entire; whence it would ſeem they alſo might claim a right to be ſupported out of the common fund, as if they had given up their all to encreaſe it.

This conduct was certainly highly criminal; it included the greateſt vain-glory, the groſſeſt hypocriſy and falſehood, combined with fraud, and this practiſed on the apoſtles, whom they daily beheld exerciſing a ſupernatural power; whom they pretended to believe gifted with the ſpirit of God, and commiſſioned by him to inſtruct mankind; and to whom they profeſſed the moſt implicit obedience. Falſhood under ſuch circumſtances, when all other Chriſtians were animated with ſuch an oppoſite temper, ſeems to have been as great an act of impiety as can well be imagined: and ſurely we cannot therefore wonder that the divine juſtice ſhould inflict a ſignal puniſhment on ſuch perſons, to prevent the authority of the apoſtles, and the holy ſpirit which actuated them from falling into total contempt, and the Chriſtian ſociety from being over-run with fraudulent impoſtors, practiſing on the pious benevolence of the firſt converts.—And this effect was produced, "* for great FEAR fell on all the people; and "though believers were daily added to the Lord, yet, of the "reſt, durſt no man join himſelf to them." But in this whole tranſaction the apoſtles were merely the inſtruments of the divine will; they only denounced, from a ſupernatural impulſe, the impending puniſhment which divine power inflicted. Such ſeverity may, perhaps, have been peculiarly neceſſary at the beginning of the new diſpenſation, like thoſe ſignal examples of ſeverity recorded in the Old Teſtament; as in the inſtances of Nadab and Abihu, Levit. x.—and Korah, Dathan and Abiram, Numb. xvi.

* Acts iv. 13, 14.

For further information on this ſubject, conſult Benſon's Hiſtory of Chriſtianity, vol. 1, book 1, chap. iii. ſect. 4, in fine, and Leland's Anſwer to Morgan, ch. xiii.

P. 103—116. "The teſtimony of the miracles "wrought by the miſſionaries of the new faith conſi- "dered."

Acts xi. 15. Peter relates to the Chriſtians aſſembled to conſider his conduct in preaching the goſpel to the Gentiles, "As I began to ſpeak, the Holy Ghoſt fell on them, as on us, at "the beginning," and he repeats the ſame aſſertion before the council, Acts xv. 8.—and in verſe 12. "The multitude kept "ſilence, and gave audience to Barnabas and Paul, declaring "what miracles and wonders God had wrought among the "Gentiles by them." And this was done to influence the deciſion of the council, which it did effectually.

P. 118. "In a violent tumult at Jeruſalem, &c."

In defence of St. Paul's conduct on this occaſion, conſult Limborchi Collatio cum Judæo, p. 134—165, and Benſon's Hiſtory of Chriſtianity, vol. 3. book 3, chap. viii. ſect. 3, p. 241. edit. 2. and Doddridge's Expoſitor, in Loc. vol. 3. p. 365.—and Leland's Anſwer to Morgan, chap. xiv. The objection that St. Paul diſſembled his profeſſion of Chriſtianity in order to eſcape danger, is advanced by Orobio, the Jew, in his Amica Collatio cum Limborcho, p. 134, in theſe words,—"In Judea, (ſays he) "where the danger of perſecution was imminent, "where he was accuſed of apoſtatizing from the law of the "Jews, and had been taken by the Roman procurator; he, "before Feſtus and Agrippa, denied all things of which he "was accuſed, ſaying, that he had taught nothing contrary to "circumciſion, or the laws of his country, but that the people "perſecuted him becauſe he preached the reſurrection of the "dead, and related that he had ſeen ſome celeſtial viſion, (to "which the Phariſees, in oppoſition to the Sadducees, aſſented) "and becauſe he taught repentance; though it was not true, "that it was on account of theſe things he had excited the ha- "tred of the people, but becauſe he turned away the Jews from "circumciſion, and other legal rites, as abundantly appears

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" from the Acts of the Apoſtles, and the Epiſtles. Thus did " they to the utmoſt of their power avoid danger." Limborch's Anſwer, p. 165, ſeems very ſatisfactory, " in exclaiming in the Jewiſh ſenate, that " *for the hope and reſurrection of the dead* " *he was called in queſtion;* and thus exciting a diſſention between " the Phariſees and Sadducees, how was Paul culpable? " Did he deny he was a Chriſtian? No—he only ſaid he was " brought into judgment, on account of the reſurrection of the " dead; and was not this true? was it not the principal " doctrine of the Chriſtian religion, that Chriſt had riſen, and " that all who believe and obey him ſhould riſe like him [rather " that all mankind ſhould riſe to judgment.] Thus he who is " tried for the Chriſtian religion, is really tried for the reſur- " rection of the dead. Paul was too well known to the Jews, " and it was too notorious that he was a Chriſtian for him to " deny it, if he even wiſhed to do ſo, or for the Phariſees to " believe his denial. Paul ſpoke in the Sanhedrim not directly " of Chriſt, but of the reſurrection of the dead, that he might " ſhew that the Phariſees had no cauſe to perſecute the Chriſtian " religion, ſince it ſo ſtrongly ſupported the principal doctrine " which they eſpouſed againſt the Sadducees."—So far Limborch.

We may add, Paul's conduct was the more juſtifiable, as Ananias, who was a Sadducee, and probably the chief of the ſect, was ſo incenſed againſt him, he would not afford him any opportunity of exculpating himſelf, but interrupted him with a groſs inſult in the very firſt ſentence of his defence; there ſeemed therefore no other expedient to procure an impartial hearing, but that of intereſting ſome of the Sanhedrim to interfere in ſupport of the apoſtle, and curb the violence of Ananias and his party. The mode adopted by St. Paul, ſeemed moſt likely to effect this; but ſo heated were the paſſions of his enemies, even this could not ſucceed; the diſſenſion excited by the leaſt attempt to protect the accuſed apoſtle, was ſo violent, that the chief captain was obliged to interfere, and take him by force from amongſt them, leaſt they ſhould tear him to pieces. Had Paul not employed this expedient, the entire Sanhedrim would have probably unanimouſly condemned him to death, and, as probably, on the inſtant executed their ſentence, by

what they termed a judgment of zeal. Thus St. Paul ſeemed to have no means of obtaining an opportunity to vindicate his innocence, or even of ſaving his life, but that which he adopted, in which he did not in the leaſt violate truth, or deny Chriſtianity.

What Orobio aſſerts of St. Paul's conduct before Feſtus and Agrippa, is an abſolute falſehood. Before them he openly avows his faith in Chriſt, relates his miraculous converſion to that faith, and ſtrenuouſly defends its truth.

The propriety and wiſdom of his conduct, as to the obſervance of the Jewiſh law, are, I truſt, ſufficiently vindicated in this chapter.

P. 123.—" And this to carry on a deceit, which, " inſtead of being (as ſome have wickedly and falſe- " ly termed it a pious fraud) would have been the " moſt impious and blaſphemous impoſture which " human imagination can conceive; exalting a cru- " cified deceiver, a man rejected and abandoned of " God, as the Son of God and judge of the " world."

It ſhould have been added, that it would have been alſo an impoſture of the moſt cruel and treacherous kind, involving their converts in the moſt ſevere diſtreſſes and perſecutions, nay, expoſing them to the moſt cruel tortures and deaths; and ſtill further, to aggravate the guilt of this deceit, the more humble and benevolent, the more virtuous and pious men were, the more likely it was that they ſhould become the victims of this fatal deluſion, the conductors of which on this ſuppoſition practiſed on the virtues of their unhappy dupes, whom they expoſed to almoſt certain miſery, by flattering them with the hopes of another life; hopes which theſe deceivers could not but know were grounded on facts palpably falſe, but which they ſolemnly atteſted as true. Vid. this point excellently illuſtrated by Doddridge, in his ſecond ſermon on the Evidences of Chriſtianity, head the 2d. In Piſtorius's Notes on Hartley, vol. 3. from p. 613 to 619, and Lord Lyttleton on the Converſion of St. Paul, p. 22.

P. 121.

P. 121.—" The teſtimony of hiſtory renders pro-
" bable what St. Paul inſinuates, that Ananias was
" not in truth at that time high prieſt."

Conſult on this ſubject Michaeli's Lectures, tranſlated by Marſh, vol. 1. p. 52.

P. 138.—" Throughout the four evangeliſts not
" one viſion to any of the writers is ſo much as
" mentioned."

Perhaps I ought to have excepted the transfiguration of our Lord on Mount Tabor, related by three of the evangeliſts. It may be obſerved on this, as well as every other ſupernatural appearance recorded in the hiſtory of the New Teſtament, which was not attended by ſome certain miracle, ſubmitted to the deliberate examination of the reaſon, as well as the ſenſes of the ſpectators; that they were not intended or uſed as *proofs* of a divine miſſion, but are repreſented as deriving their entire credibility from their connection with the plain and ſenſible miracles, to which alone our Lord and the apoſtles appealed, as proofs of their divine authority. Thus our Lord commands the apoſtles, who were witneſſes of his transfiguration, " to tell
" no man what viſion they had ſeen, till the Son of Man ſhould
" be riſen from the dead:"—an event eſtabliſhed by ſuch undeniable evidence of ſenſe, as would evince the credibility of the transfiguration, while it would alſo explain its real meaning, and prevent it from being miſtaken as a preſage of that ſplendid, but temporal kingdom, which it was expected the Meſſiah ſhould aſſume. Thus while the claims of enthuſiaſts are ſupported ſolely by tranſitory viſions and ſecret miracles, the founders of Chriſtianity, even when they relate ſuch occurrences as having really happened; yet expreſsly diſtinguiſh between them and the unqueſtionable facts which they adduce, as the only proofs of their divine miſſion. Can any contraſt be more ſtriking than this?—yet this diſtinction has not been ſufficiently attended to by deiſtical writers, to prevent their charging the apoſtles with fanaticiſm. On this ſcore St. Paul in particular has been violently accuſed of it, in conſequence of the viſion related by him in the ſecond Epiſtle to the Corinthians, chap. xii. 1—10.

—10. In anſwer to this charge, I think it ſufficient to refer to the obſervations of Lord Lyttleton on this paſſage. Vid. his Converſion of St. Paul, from p. 151 to 153.

It is alledged as a ſtrong inſtance, to ſhew that Chriſtian faith is founded on immediate inſpiration and infuſed evidence alone, that when our Lord ſaid to St. Matthew, *follow me*, "immediately he left all and followed him."

"It would ſurely ſeem ſtrange, (ſays the * advancer of this "objection) humanly conſidered, to ſee him thus deſerting a "beneficial employment, for he knew not whom, at a word's "ſpeaking;" as if it were in any degree probable that St. Matthew, who reſided at Capernaum, which was the place of our Lord's general reſidence, as well as that of many of his diſciples, and the ſcene of many of his moſt diſtingniſhed miracles, ſhould not know who our Lord was. He had healed there, before this call, the Centurion's ſon, Matth. viii.—and very ſhortly before, the paralytic, who was let down through the roof, our Lord was ſurrounded by ſuch multitudes. But, ſays this author, † "it is likely if what he had ſeen before had "had that good effect upon him, as to diſpoſe him to diſciple-"ſhip, he would have had the merit of engaging voluntarily "in the ſervice, without waiting for a particular addreſs." What a likelihood is this!—was it then in St. Matthew's power to chooſe whether he ſhould become the ſelect follower, the intimate friend, the confidential miniſter, of our Lord? and would it have been decorous to obtrude himſelf, unaſked, into ſuch a ſituation? or, on the other hand, when a teacher, who had ſo fully proved his divine character, invited him to this ſacred function, was it unreaſonable to obey the gracious call?

P. 140.—"The *character and conduct* of Chriſt "Jeſus; without attempting to delineate all the fea-"tures of this conſummate character, &c."

Such a minute vindication of our Lord's character ſeems the leſs neceſſary, as a number of writers have pointed out its ſpotleſs perfection, by the greateſt variety of arguments; and though

* Vid. Chriſtianity not founded on argument, p. 65.
† Ibid.

perhaps

perhaps no one of them has confined himſelf ſtrictly to the ſubject of enthuſiaſm, yet almoſt any one, ſuggeſts abundant proofs of our Saviour's total freedom from any ſuch weakneſs —particularly Duchal, in the admirable diſcourſes on our Saviour's character, with which he begins his preſumptive arguments for the Truth of the Chriſtian Religion, printed in London, 1753. Macknight in his Truth of the Goſpel Hiſtory, Lond. 1733, b. 1, chap. iii. and iv. Biſhop Law in his Reflections on the Life and Character of Chriſt, annexed to his Theory of Religion. Dr. Randolph in his View of our Saviour's Miniſtry, and particularly Primate Newcome, in his Obſervations on our Lord's Conduct and Character; who has enumerated the different writers who preceded him on this ſubject, while his own work ſupplies ſuch copious information as will, in all probability, ſatisfy the ſerious enquirer.

Should my young readers wiſh to collect from Dr. Newcome's work, at one view, the parts that moſt immediately relate to this circumſtance in our Lord's character, they will be aſſiſted by the following references; they will find the nature of his doctrines explained in part 1, chap. i. the ſix firſt ſections; the reaſonableneſs of his precepts vindicated, part 1, chap. ii.; his caution and reſerve in aſſerting his Meſſiahſhip juſtified, part 1, chap. iii. ſect. 3; and to confine ourſelves to theſe virtues which are more immediately connected with this ſubject, they will find his juſtice illuſtrated in part 2, chap. i. ſect. 4.

His temperance, part 2, chap. i. ſect. 5.
His meekneſs, Ib. ſect. 6.
His humility, Ib. ſect. 7.
His reſpect for civil and religious authority } Ib. ſect. 12.
And above all, his conſummate prudence } Ib. ſect. 13.

If they peruſe theſe ſections with care, and add the recapitulation of our Lord's character, in part 2, chap. i. the 14th ſection, with the confirmation of the whole, derived from the teſtimony borne to it by enemies, adduced in book 2, chap. ii. and from the artleſs and impartial manner of the evangeliſts, illuſtrated in chap. iii. of the ſame work, they cannot, I think, but receive the fulleſt conviction, that the divine Jeſus was totally

tally free from every ſymptom of enthuſiaſm, and adorned with that perfect wiſdom and ſober dignity which became the teacher of righteouſneſs and the Son of God.

P. 196.—"*I ſay the truth in Chriſt Jeſus; I lie "not; my conſcience alſo bearing me witneſs in the Holy "Ghoſt, that I have great heavineſs and continual "ſorrow in my heart; for I could wiſh that I myſelf "were accurſed from Chriſt for my brethren.*"

The commentators on this paſſage (Rom. ix. 3.) labour to qualify and to ſoften this exclamation; I confeſs I ſee not the neceſſity of doing ſo—ſuch a wiſh could never be conceived as made deliberately and ſeriouſly, becauſe it implies an impoſſibility which it would be repugnant to the attributes of God to ſuffer, and therefore it would be impious ſeriouſly to wiſh. It ſeems to me nothing more than a natural though bold hyperbole, burſting forth from the apoſtle, whoſe quick ſenſibility diſtreſſed at the idea of the rejection of his countrymen, which he was under the neceſſity of announcing, labours to find the ſtrongeſt terms for expreſſing his ardent affection for them, and his grief at this rejection. An hyperbole almoſt as ſtrong occurs, when the apoſtle (Gal. i. 8.) anxious to impreſs upon the Galatians the danger of apoſtatizing from the truth of the goſpel, and the guilt of thoſe who ſhould attempt to ſeduce them, exclaims, "though we, or an angel from heaven, preach "any other goſpel unto you than that which we have preached "unto you, let him be accurſed." Surely this does not imply that the apoſtle ſeriouſly thought it poſſible that he himſelf or an angel from heaven ſhould preach contrary to the goſpel he delivered them. Perhaps this hyperbole was ſuggeſted to the apoſtle by the paſſage, Exod. xxxii. 32. when Moſes wiſhes to be blotted out of the book of God, rather than that the Iſraelites ſhould not be forgiven their ſin. Whoever wiſhes to ſee other interpretations may conſult Locke and Macknight in Loc. and Witſius's Diſſertation upon it in the ſecond volume of his Miſcellanea Sacra; and eſpecially a ſermon on this text, preached before the univerſity of Oxford, by Dr. James Bandinell, annexed to his ſermons preached at Bampton's lecture in the year 1780, Oxford, 1780.

Obſervations

Obſervations on the chief objections made to the morality of the goſpel, as being extravagant and fanatical.

In the preface it has been ſhewn in what ſtrong terms the morality of the goſpel has been accuſed of fanaticiſm; and in the 6th chapter, thoſe characters have been pointed out which ſeem moſt decidedly contrary to ſuch a ſpirit—characters which, it is hoped, will vindicate it from this accuſation. It would be extremely tedious to quote all the texts which have been overſtrained or miſrepreſented by the miſtaken friends, or the prejudiced enemies of Chriſtianity, ſo as to afford pretexts for this imputation, and it is ſcarcely poſſible to interpret doubtful or obſcure paſſages of ſcripture without an immediate compariſon with the original context; commentators muſt therefore be reſorted to for the explanation of particular texts. It may be ſufficient here to enumerate the general grounds on which this accuſation has been ſupported, hinting at the anſwers which may be made and referring to authors, where ſuch queſtions will be found ſatisfactorily diſcuſſed.

The firſt pretext is derived from the ſtrong terms in which the writers of the New Teſtament ſpeak of the little value which is to be ſet on the things of this world, or the ſeverity with which they condemn them, and enjoin men to look to the favour of God, and the rewards of another life, as the great, nay, almoſt the ſole object worth their attention. "* Love not the "world, neither the things of the world." "† Take no "thought (it ſhould be no *anxious* thought) for to-morrow, "what ye ſhall eat or what ye ſhall drink, or wherewithal ye "ſhall be clothed; ‡ whether ye eat or drink, or whatſoever "ye do, do all to the glory of God: § the friendſhip of the "world is enmity with God." Theſe, and ſuch paſſages as theſe, are adduced to ſhew that Chriſtianity inculcates a ſcheme of morality wholly impracticable and enthuſiaſtic, inconſiſtent with the feelings of human nature, and the buſineſs of human life. On this charge it may be obſerved, that it is moſt certain Chriſtianity does not give any reaſonable ground to ſuppoſe that

* 1 John ii. 15. † Matt. vi. 31. ‡ 1 Cor x. 31. § James iv. 4.

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it encourages men to * forſake the neceſſary buſineſs, or the uſeful relations of human life; that it ſuppoſes the ſtations of huſband, and wife, and children; of maſters and ſervants, of rulers and ſubjects, of rich and poor, of teachers and learners; and that it gives ſuch rules for human conduct in all theſe different ſituations, as require ſtrict integrity, active benevolence, unaſſuming humility, patience and reſignation; in ſhort, every quality which tends to promote the happineſs of the individual, and the welfare of ſociety; rules, which if practiſed, would make the whole world a ſcene of virtue, piety, and peace.

It is equally certain that † induſtry, attention to the intereſts of thoſe with whom we are connected, or for whom we are concerned, far from being prohibited or diſcountenanced, are recommended, and even enjoined. It may in the next place eaſily be ſhewn, that thoſe paſſages which ſeem moſt ſtrongly to condemn the world, the things of the world, and the cares of the world, mean only to condemn the ‡ ſordid purſuits, and vicious pleaſures, and exceſſive love of the world; to condemn ſenſuality, ambition, covetouſneſs, extreme ſolicitude, repining at the diſpenſations, and diſtruſting the providence of God. But while we vindicate the goſpel from ſuch miſinterpretations as would pervert its exalted, but rational precepts, into fanatical rants, we muſt never forget that its precepts, and its motives are really § exalted, far exalted above the general ideas, and general practice of mankind. That it propoſes the fear and the love of God as the leading principles of action, to which every other motive muſt be ſubordinate, and by which every action ought to be controuled. That theſe ſacred principles are not to confine their operations to occaſional prayers, to a temporary and tranſitory influence in the church or the cloſet, but

* Vid. Supra, p. 94, 95, and compare Rom. xii. xiii. and xv. chapters. Gal. v. and vi. Col. iii. and iv. 1 Tim. iii. and iv. v. and vi. Titus ii. and iii. How admirably the principles and precepts of Chriſtianity may be applied to illuſtrate and enforce the different duties of every rank of life, conſult Giſborne's Excellent Enquiry into theſe Duties paſſim; his Concluſion on the Truth of Chriſtianity, is peculiarly worthy attention.

† Vid. ſupra, p. 95, 96—101.

‡ Vid. Maclaine's Letters to Soame Jenyns, Letter 4th.

§ Vid. Mr. Wilberforce's excellent View of Profeſſed Chriſtianity, contraſted with real Chriſtianity, particularly chap. iv. v. and vii.

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to regulate our conduct in active life as constantly as in religious retirement. This will seem to a worldly or depraved mind enthusiastic; but the true philosopher and the enlightened statesman know that the perpetual effort at improvement, the humble and self-distrusting watchfulness which these precepts of the gospel require, most directly tend to promote the perfection of the individual and the * happiness of society. Far therefore from inducing a suspicion that they originate in fanaticism, they strongly confirm the divine original of the Christian scheme.

A second pretext on which the charge of fanaticism has been advanced against the morality of the gospel, is derived from the manner in which it teaches men to feel and act towards enemies, and the strong terms in which it inculcates, patience under injury; and totally forbids retaliation and revenge. † "Love "your enemies, bless them which curse you, and pray for them "that despitefully use and persecute you. Resist not evil, but "whosoever shall smite thee on the right cheek, turn to him the "other also."

These, and such passages as these, are condemned as fanatical and extravagant, inculcating an abject and slavish temper, directing what it is impossible to practise, and what, if possible, would be pernicious to society, and destructive to the individual. That such objections should be strongly urged and readily allowed is not much to be wondered at, in an age when duelling is still permitted to disgrace civilized society, ennobling the infliction of personal revenge, and punishing injury, or vindicating character on the principles first taught by the savage barbarism of that Gothic ignorance, which unable to distinguish guilt from innocence by reason and evidence, substituted trial by battle as an appeal to God; but the philanthropist and the philoso-

* Vid. an honourable Testimony of the Importance of Christianity to social Happiness, in Montesquieu's Spirit of Laws, book 24th, chap. iii. and vi. and a Letter of his to Warburton, preserved in the divine legation, book 3, sect. 1. near the conclusion.

† Matt. v. 44. Ibid. 39. Vid. in explanation of these and similar passages, Newcome's Observations on our Lord's Character, &c. part 1, chap. i. particularly sect. 1 and 9. Vid. also Leland's Answer to Morgan, chap. xiii. and xvi. his View of the Deistical Writers, letter 21, in his observations on Mr. Hume's Ideas of Christian Morality. Also Letter 22, in Answer to Lord Bolingbroke.

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pher will not form his deciſion on ſuch principles, but will candidly criticiſe the texts of Scripture thus condemned, and conſider the true nature of that * general ſpirit and temper they recommend. He will obſerve, that to take theſe texts, in their rigorous literal ſenſe, is in many inſtances totally unreaſonable. They were meant, in many caſes, (as in the texts here quoted) to counteract the miſinterpretations of the Jewiſh doctors, who, becauſe the Moſaic † code enjoined the law of equal retaliation to be obſerved in the puniſhment of crimes by the regular ſentence of a public judge, transferred this rule to the indulgence of private revenge; and were notorious alſo for want of charity in their feelings and conduct to all perſons not of their own nation and their own ſect, and even to whole bodies of men, whoſe profeſſions, though neceſſary and innocent, they branded as diſgraceful and infamous. Hence the contrary principles of forbearance, under injuries, and love to all were inculcated by our Lord with peculiar emphaſis, and illuſtrated by the moſt ſtriking and familiar inſtances, which however, ſo far as immediate patience and ſufferance of injury without reſiſtance is enforced, are all taken from injuries of a more tolerable kind, from ſuch encroachments, as it is really wiſer to bear, than litigiouſly to contend againſt. But it appears from various paſſages, that it is not the particular literal rule which it is meant ſtrictly to enforce as an example in every inſtance to be imitated; but that it is meant to recommend in the ſtrongeſt manner the general temper of humility, mildneſs, patience, ſubmiſſion, ready forgiveneſs, and active benevolence, even under the greateſt provocations; and to condemn as ſtrongly what the world ſo generally admires, or at leaſt tolerates, high ſpirit, quick reſentment, prompt retaliation, unyielding enmity.

And conſidering theſe precepts in this view, we immediately ſee the neceſſity of expreſſing them in the ſtrongeſt manner, with no other limitations or exceptions, than what reaſon and neceſſity would plainly point out in each particular inſtance; for had the general rule been attended with any limitation of a general nature, how would human depravity and violence force every

* Conſult Paley's Evidences of Chriſtianity, part 2, ch. ii. and Newcome's Obſervat. ut ſupra.

† Vid. Exod. xxii. 22 to 26.

particular

particular inſtance within this limitation, and plead the divine permiſſion to ſanction the greateſt exceſſes of malignity. Who is there who reviews the perſecutions which have diſgraced the profeſſion of Chriſtianity, and the conſtant power of the angry and malignant paſſions in human life, and will not perceive the fatal uſe which would have been made of any relaxation or exception in thoſe precepts of the goſpel which relate to this ſubject? Yet notwithſtanding this, we find in the inſtructions of our Lord and his apoſtles, and even in their conduct, ſufficient proofs that they did not recommend or practiſe that total inſenſibility under injury, and that indifference as to their ſafety and their character, which might give ſome plauſible reaſon to charge them with fanaticiſm. They diſtinguiſhed clearly and ſtrongly between * juſtice and injuſtice, malignity and benevolence in the conduct of thoſe with whom they were concerned, and in the treatment they themſelves received. They reſorted to ſuch legal and innocent means of guarding both their ſafety and their good name as were compatible with their particular ſituation and the peculiar object of their miſſion; and they enjoin men to † diſcriminate, and to avoid, nay even, when their ſtation authorizes it, to cenſure and puniſh the obſtinately vicious and perverſe. When therefore, men's conduct towards ourſelves, diſplays clearly that perverſeneſs and malignity which we ſhould be bound to cenſure and puniſh when it is practiſed towards others; it cannot be meant that we ſhould be ſo blind as to view them with the ſame affection and regard, as if they had diſplayed no ſuch qualities. We are certainly juſtified in guarding againſt them, in avoiding them, and if it is neceſſary to the welfare of individuals, and the peace and order of ſociety, we are bound to warn others againſt them, and to adopt ſuch means of expoſing their crimes, and puniſhing them, as the laws of the ſociety to which we belong require. But we are alſo bound by the precepts of Chriſtianity, not to ſuffer our conduct to be guided by any mixture of perſonal reſentment. We are never to permit ourſelves to loſe the inclination, or neglect any opportunity of doing every thing in our power to benefit even our greateſt enemies. ‡ "If

* Vid. our Lord's reply to the officer who ſmote him, John xiii. 23. and ſupra, chap. iii. ſect. 4, p. 115 to to 124.

† Vid. Matt. xviii. 15 to 18. 1 Cor. v. 13. Rom. xvi. 17. Phil. iii. 18.

‡ Rom. xii. 20.

" thine enemy hunger, feed him, if he thirſt, give him drink, " for in ſo doing thou mayeſt heap coals of fire on his head." You may ſoften and melt down the heart hardened in vice and malignity, by the kindly glow of benevolence and gratitude, and * thus " not be overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good." We ſhould be ever anxious for the reformation of our greateſt enemies; and the more anxious, the more we are aſſured of their malice and their guilt, becauſe they are ſo much the more wretched and pitiable. Such is the ſyſtem of Chriſtian morality on the forgiveneſs of injuries; and undoubtedly, it is ſo far exalted above the principles and practice, even of the profeſſed Chriſtian world, that it will be readily pronounced enthuſiaſtic and extravagant by all mere men of the world. But it is ſo conſonant to the feelings of virtue, and the intereſts of mankind, and ſo little conformable to what might have been naturally expected from the prejudices and bigotry of the Jews, at the period when the goſpel was promulgated, as plainly to indicate, that it was derived from a far different ſource, the wiſdom and mercy of God.

Another pretext on which the morality of the goſpel has been charged with fanaticiſm, is, that it is ſaid, " it conſiders mar- " riage as a ſtate of imperfection;" but this is ſo contrary to the whole tenor of the principles and conduct of the apoſtles, that it ſcarcely deſerves a reply. Our Lord, probably from a prophetic foreſight of the extreme abuſes, which this error would give riſe to in his church, choſe to commence the manifeſtation of his divine power, by honoring a marriage † with his preſence, and aſſiſting the innocent feſtivity of the entertainment, by miraculouſly ſupplying the maſter of the feaſt with wine, probably to make up the deficiency occaſioned by the number of diſciples, who may have attended on himſelf; and he has ennobled and ſtrengthened the marriage-tye, by expreſsly declaring, that God, when he made man at the beginning, ‡ " made them male and " female, and ſaid, for this cauſe ſhall a man leave father and " mother, and ſhall cleave to his wife, and they twain ſhall be " one fleſh; wherefore, they are no more twain, but one fleſh; " what therefore God hath joined together, let no man put " aſunder." Yet, notwithſtanding this expreſs declaration of

* Ibidem. † John ii. ‡ Matt. xix. 4.

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the divine original of marriage, immediately before their eyes, deiſtical writers have preſumed to alledge an obſcure and figurative phraſe, which occurs a few verſes after as a deciſive proof, that our Lord diſparaged that ſacred inſtitution; yet, on a faithful compariſon with the original, the contrary appears. I adopt the tranſlation of the learned and ingenious Mr. Wakefield. The whole paſſage, after the words already quoted, runs thus:—"They ſay unto him, why then did Moſes command "us to give a writing of ſeparation, and to divorce her? he "ſaith unto them, Moſes, becauſe of the hardneſs of your hearts, "permitted you to divorce your wives, but in the beginning it "was not ſo: but I ſay unto you, whoſoever ſhall put away his "wife, ſaving for adultery, and marry another, he committeth "adultery. His diſciples ſay unto him, if the caſe of the "huſband be ſo with the wife, it is better not to marry. But "he ſaid unto them, *none are capable of that ſave they to whom it is "given;* for there are eunuchs who were ſo from their birth, "and there are eunuchs who were made ſo by men, and there "are eunuchs who made themſelves ſuch for the kingdom of "heaven; ſo he who is able to endure it, let him endure "it."

Mr. Wakefield's remark on the words marked in Italics is, "that abſtinence from marriage is the thing here ſpoken of by "our Saviour." The meaning then of the entire paſſage is, that ſuch abſtinence far from generally tending, as the diſciples ſeemed to conceive, to the happineſs of the individual, or being fit to be enjoined on any numerous deſcriptions of men, was adapted to ſome few individuals only; and that as there were only a few who were obliged to abſtain from marriage from neceſſity, whether natural or accidental, ſo there were but a few who could do ſo on a religious motive, though ſome few there might be. Surely the paſſage thus explained breaths nothing of that fanatical exaltation of celibacy, which in ſubſequent ages corrupted the ſimplicity of Chriſtianity. With as little reaſon has St. Paul been accuſed of partially exalting celibacy; becauſe in a period of great perſecution, he * ſtated it as his advice, that in the *preſent diſtreſs* it was better for thoſe who were ſingle to continue ſo, marriage multiplying the ob-

* 1 Cor. vii. 26.

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jects of anxiety, which, at such a period, would distract their minds; but he takes the greatest care to have it understood, that this was merely spoke *of himself*, not * as of divine command, and maintains, in the strongest terms, the innocence and the general utility of marriage; which in another place he declares, "† is honourable in all," which he states was sanctioned by the ‡ practice of the apostles themselves, and as to which, he asserts his own right to imitate their example if he pleased, though from motives of expediency he declined doing so. But such cavils as these do not deserve to be noticed farther than to shew my young readers, little versed in the arts of controversy, how slight are the grounds on which such cavils are advanced, and how detached and obscure texts are forced into the service of infidelity, while direct, plain, and repeated declarations, as well as the general spirit of scripture, and even the immediate example of our Lord and his apostles, are totally over-looked.

I know not of any other points in which Christian morality has been accused of fanaticism; it has indeed been § censured as not enjoining friendship and patriotism. But does not that religion which teaches men to be ‖ humble, benevolent, sympathetic, "weeping with those who weep, and rejoicing with those "who rejoice," "in honour preferring one another"—which recommends placability, forgiveness of injuries, anxiety for the soul's welfare—which condemns ambition, envying, strife, avarice;—does not this religion lay the foundation, and inculcate the principles on which only true friendship can be erected? Thus also, when Christianity teaches men to love their neighbours as themselves, to "¶ obey those who rule over them in "singleness of heart, not for wrath, but for conscience sake; "to give tribute to whom tribute is due, fear to whom fear, "honour to whom honour; to love the brotherhood, fear "God, and honour the king;" when it teaches men to perform

* Vid. Cor. vii. 25 and 26. † Heb. xiii. 4.

‡ Vid. 1 Cor. ix. 5. Supra, p. 95.

§ Vid. Shaftsbury's Characteristics, p. 93 to 102; and in Answer Brown's Essays on the Characteristics. Essay 3. sect. 10, and Maclaine's Fifth Letter to Soame Jenyns.

‖ Rom. xii. 15. ¶ Ibid. xii. 10.

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every duty, and attend to every relation of civil life—to promote peace and order, and brotherly love. Are not these the true means of promoting the happiness of our country? Is not the man who acts on these principles the true patriot? If from theory we turn to example, did not Jesus, when he laboured to recall his countrymen to religion and virtue, act the patriot? When he lamented, in terms the most tenderly affectionate, the infatuated obstinacy and guilt of his countrymen; when he wept at the * approaching desolation which their guilt provoked, and which he so long laboured to avert, did he not in these instances feel as a patriot? When he shed tears at the grave of Lazarus, did he not feel as a friend? When, at his last supper before his sufferings, he addressed his apostles—" † This " is my commandment, that ye love one another as I have loved " you; greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay " down his life for his friends. Ye are my friends, if you do " whatsoever I command you: henceforth I call you not ser- " vants, for the servant knoweth not what his Lord doeth: but I " have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of " my father, I have made known unto you"—Was not this the language of friendship? When the beloved disciple leaned on his ‡ bosom; when in the agony of death he § committed his mother to the care of that disciple, did he not in these instances feel and act as a friend?—Thus too, in the great apostle of the Gentiles, did not his zeal for the reformation and happiness of his countrymen glow with such ardor, that his expressions of it have been accused of rising to a fanatic violence; and in his epistles to Timothy and Titus, as well as his intercession with ‖ Philemon in behalf of Onesimus do we not discern that spirit of friendship which ennobles and refines the mind; the most anxious wishes, and most watchful attention to their temporal and eternal interest, the strictest confidence in their piety and virtue, and the tenderest sympathy in their cares and distresses. Such are the examples which Christianity holds out; why then is it accused of not encouraging patriotism and friendship? because it does not make either the subject of a direct encomium, or the object of a direct precept. Let us consider whether this

* Luke xix. 41. † John xv. 12. ‡ Ib. xiii. 23. § Ib. xix. 26, 27.
‖ Vid. supra, p. 196. ‖ Vid. supra, p. 190.

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can be accounted for.—Had the Jews been exhorted to patriotism, would they not have understood it as a call to rescue their country from the Roman yoke? Had the Romans—would not some have thought it their duty to be active in aggrandizing the power of the empire, and others, in resisting the despotism of the emperor? and were objects such as these fit to be even indirectly recommended by the preachers of piety and peace?—Even to this hour is not patriotism too generally understood to consist in that narrow and mistaken spirit of monopolizing ambition, which, says a * spirited writer, "imitates the mean partiality of a parish "officer, and labours to enrich and aggrandize the patriot's "particular district at the expence of every other;" and would it have been safe to make a virtue, so grosly mistaken and so much abused, the object of direct panegyric, or recommend it any other way than by enjoining every virtue, and inculcating every principle which supports true patriotism, in such a manner as could not be perverted to countenance the false—and by exhibiting in the author of our religion, the most exalted example of this, as of every other virtue?

Finally, if we consider the nature of friendship, it would have been evidently impossible to make this the object of a direct precept. Friendship depends not merely on ourselves; it requires that other persons should possess taste and feelings congenial with ours; it requires an opportunity of cultivating, and the happiness of conciliating a return of confidence and affection; and how would this have founded as the object of a direct precept? † "Take care on pain of divine displeasure, to find out "some one or more persons of dispositions and pursuits similar "to your own; take care that not only you should give them, but "that they shall give you opportunities of cultivating a mutual "regard: finally, love them, and remember you are under an "indispensible obligation, that they shall love you." Such is the language, for the want of which superficial declaimers arraign the morality of the gospel; when will they learn "to under-"stand first, and not till then rebuke!"

* Soame Jenyns.

† I have met with this answer to Shaftsbury, I think in Dr. Beattie's Evidences of Christianity, 12mo. I have not now the book by me.

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That Shaftſbury is fairly chargeable with this abſurdity, appears from his own definition of friendſhip, in his characteriſtics, v. 1. p. 99. He remarks that the "heroic virtues of "private friendſhip, and zeal for the public and our country, "are virtues purely voluntary in a Chriſtian; they are no eſ- "ſential parts of his charity—his converſation is in heaven, "nor has he any occaſion for ſuch ſupernumerary cares or em- "barraſſments here on earth, as may obſtruct his way thither, "or retard him in the careful taſk of working out his ſalvation. "—Under the Jewiſh diſpenſation (he ſays) each of theſe virtues "had illuſtrious examples, and were in ſome manner recom- "mended;" but of Chriſtianity he makes no ſuch acknowledgment.—Friendſhip he thus defines—"By private friendſhip, no "reader can here ſuppoſe is meant that common benevolence "and charity, which every Chriſtian is obliged to ſhew towards "all men, and in particular towards his fellow Chriſtians, his "neighbour, brother and kindred of whatever degree, but "that peculiar relation, which is formed by a cement and har- "mony of minds, by mutual eſteem and reciprocal tenderneſs "and affection, and which we emphatically call a FRIENDSHIP. "Such was that between the Jewiſh heroes, David and Jona- "than, whoſe love ſurpaſſed that of women; ſuch were thoſe "friendſhips deſcribed ſo frequently by poets, between Pylades "and Oreſtes, Theſeus and Pirithous, &c. &c. &c.

Such therefore is the friendſhip which the noble Lord blames Chriſtianity for not requiring as a duty, or diſtinguiſhing by a peculiar reward.—Alas! was it not too much to expect that every man to be a good Chriſtian muſt be a Pylades or an Oreſtes, a Theſeus or Pirithous?

References and Examples to confirm the Aſſertions advanced in the preceding Eſſay, as to the Characters of genuine Fanaticiſm.

On this ſubject I have thought it ſufficient to ſelect but a few examples, and make very brief extracts from the writers to whom I refer. I could not bring myſelf to read many details of ſuch extravagance and abſurdity; and I cannot ſuppoſe my readers would deſire I ſhould copy them. It was, however, indiſpenſably neceſſary to give ſome examples, to render the

contraſt between the ſober conduct and rational doctrines of the Apoſtles, and the extravagancies and follies of fanaticiſm deciſive and conſpicuous.

As to the nature of the evidence by which enthuſiaſts declare they were themſelves convinced of their divine MISSION, OR TO WHICH THEY APPEAL TO CONVINCE OTHERS.

"Blind credulity, and dictatorial poſitiveneſs, "form the two leading and eſſential marks of an "enthuſiaſtic mind." Vid ſupra, p. 3.

P. 6.—"Enthuſiaſtic faith is founded on an inter-"nal perſuaſion alone, &c."

P. 22.—"The impulſe of fanaticiſm will produce "its effects irregularly and imperfectly, &c."

P. 29.—"Fanatical deluſions ſeldom laſt longer "than while they meet with minds all equally and "fitly diſpoſed to catch the impulſe, &c."

P. 42.—"The apoſtles did not appeal to agitations "of mind, or convulſions of body—viſions by "night, or ſecret whiſpers by day, &c."

P. 65.—"Enthuſiaſts are prone to miſtake the "chimeras of a diſordered fancy for the viſions of a "prophetic illumination, &c."

P. 67.—"A claim to a prophetic character will "not ſucceed in ſpreading enthuſiaſm, &c."

P. 67.—"The prediction will be vague of an event "eaſily produced, and therefore eaſily foreſeen; "trifling, obſcure, &c."

P. 137.—"Enthuſiaſtic writings abound, like the "hiſtory of Mahomet, with the accounts of nocturnal "viſions, &c."

Vid. Koran, chap. 17. Abulfeda's Hiſtory, chap. 19. Maracci, prodromi ad refutationem Alcorani, tom. 2. Part 2. p. 13.

"Sometimes like the prieſteſſes of old, overpower-"ed by the influence of their god, or like the devo-"tees proſtrate at the tombs of modern ſaints, their "inſpiration is diſplayed by convulſions and agitati-"ons, &c. Sometimes like Lord Herbert, when "wound up to the height of devotion, they miſtake "the voice of a ſtill ſmall wind, as a voice from God."

Vid. Leland's deiſtical writers, vol. i. p. 24. 4th edition, 1764.

For an account of pagan enthuſiaſms, conſult Plato's Timæus, Operum tom. 3. p. 71.—Editio Stephani, cum Interpretatione Serrani, 1578.

Jamblichus de Myſteriis Ægypti, paſſim, particularly cap. 8. in fine.

Plutarchus de Defectu Oraculorum, Operum tom. ii. p. 432 and 436. Editio Xylini Francofurti, 1620.

Cicero de Divinatione, particularly lib. 1. ſec. 37. Edit. Oliveti.

Conformable to the repreſentations of theſe authors, are the poetic fictions of Virgil, Æn. lib. 6. line 45 to 50, and 76 to 80, and Lucan's Pharſalia, lib. 5. line 110 to 120, and 148 to 195.

Plato and Jamblichus are ſo much to my purpoſe, I am tempted to tranſlate a ſhort paſſage from each. Plato having deſcribed the different parts and uſes of the human frame, aſſerts, that the ſtructure of the liver rendered it a fit inſtrument for carrying to the imagination nocturnal viſions and impreſſions, ſometimes gloomy and terrific, ſometimes gentle and delightful; and adds, that here alſo was fixed the ſeat of prophetic viſion (μαντικη); for, ſays he, "They who formed "the human frame, remembering the command of the ſu-"preme Father, that they ſhould make man as excellent as "poſſible, formed even this leſs noble part, that it ſhould have "ſome apprehenſion of truth, and therefore they placed in it "the ſeat of prophetic viſion; and it is a ſufficient proof that

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" God connected this power of prophecy with the irrational
" part of man, that nobody ever attains to true and inſpired
" prophecy while in his ſober reaſon; but when the power of
" his underſtanding is impeded by ſleep, or ſubdued either by
" diſeaſe, or ſome direct divine inſpiration; for, it is the ſober
" man alone who can underſtand what is ſpoken or ſignified,
" whether in dreams, or directly by this prophetic and inſpired
" nature; and to explain the viſions thus beheld, and to diſtin-
" guiſh what any thing points out and to whom, whether it be
" good or evil, future, paſt, or preſent; for it is not the part
" of the perſon agitated by the fury of inſpiration, whether
" he ſtill continues under its dominion or not, to judge of
" what is ſeen or ſpoken by himſelf, &c."

Jamblichus is ſtill more expreſs in deſcribing the agitation, and even frenzy that attended the ſuppoſed inſpirations of paganiſm. He is endeavouring to prove the reality of theſe inſpirations; and he argues, that divination and prophecy do not ariſe from the paſſions of the mind, nor the different temperament of the body, nor from both together.—" Let us then,
" ſays he, inveſtigate the cauſes of this divine fury, which are
" nothing elſe than illuminations deſcending from the gods
" themſelves, and the ſpirits by them infuſed; and a complete
" and abſolute poſſeſſion, by which they overpower the whole
" man, which abſorbs all our faculties, and puts a ſtop to
" every natural operation, and motion, producing words which
" are not underſtood by the ſpeaker, but which they pronounce
" with a tongue moved by a divine fury, while they are entirely
" ſubſervient, and inſtrumental to the energy of the god who
" poſſeſſes them. Of this kind is every true inſpiration
" (Ενθουσιασμος); and from theſe cauſes does it ariſe, &c."
This is therefore the regular and allowed deſcription of pagan inſpirations; and conformable to this are the repreſentations of the poets, as well as the philoſophers.

If the reader wiſhes for a curious and entertaining view of fanaticiſm, let him conſult Stillingfleet, on the Idolatry of the Church of Rome, chap. 4. entitled, Of the Fanaticiſm of the Romiſh Church. Stillingfleet's Works, Vol. V. page 90 to 136, edition of 1709. He will read of St. Bridget, " in whoſe holy
" extaſies were five rays coming from the five wounds of our
" Saviour

" Saviour to five parts of her body; and ſhe prayed that the " wounds might not appear, and immediately the colour of the " blood was changed into pure light, and her confeſſor ſaw " theſe ſplendid wounds on her body." But by what inſtrument, (adds Stillingfleet), did he ſee the wound in her heart. Vid. p. 94. Alſo, of the virgin Juliana, " who had many ex- " taſies and raptures; and in her prayers, almoſt always ſaw " the moon in her brightneſs, but with a ſnip taken off from " her roundneſs, at which ſhe was much troubled. At laſt " it was revealed to her, that the moon ſignified the church, " and that fraction, the want of one ſolemnity more to be ob- " ſerved in it; upon which ſhe received a command from hea- " ven to proclaim the obſervation of this ſolemnity." And a friend of her's Iſabella, in an extaſy, " ſaw all the heavenly " orders upon their knees, ſupplicating God, that, to confirm " the faith of Chriſtians, this feaſt ſhould be obſerved, &c. &c." Ib. p. 97, 98. quoted from Bzovius, a Roman Catholic author.

St. Benedict, ſaw the ſoul of Germanus, biſhop of Capua, in a fiery circle, carried by angels to heaven.—Above all, he ſaw all the world under one ray of the ſun. Stillingfleet, ut ſupra, p. 101.

" St. Francis was converted by dreams and viſions, in which " he was ſometimes ſwallowed up in God, as Bonaventure, the " author of his life, expreſſes it. One day, when he was alone " in a ſolitary place, he fell into an extaſy of joy, and had full " aſſurance of the remiſſion of his ſins; and being tranſported " beyond himſelf, he was catched up in a wonderful light, " wherein his mind being enlarged, he foreſaw all that ſhould " come to paſs concerning his order."

But ſtill more diſtinguiſhed for fanaticiſm, was Ignatius Loyola, founder of the order of the Jeſuits. Vid. Stillingfleet, ut ſupra, from p. 118 to p. 124. who quotes only the lives written of him by his own order. " His zeal having been inflamed by " ſtudying the lives of the ſaints, he in a fit of zeal one night " got out of his bed, and fell down on his knees before the " image of the bleſſed Virgin, and in that poſture vowed him- " ſelf her devotee.—He ſoon after put on a long coat of ſack- " cloth, with a cord about it, at which he hung a bottle of wa- " ter, with a wicker ſhoe on one foot, and the other naked, and

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" his head expoſed to the violence of the weather, he proceed-
" ed on his journey. At Marneſa, he took up his lodging in
" the town hoſpital, and let his hair and nails grow, and begged
" from door to door, and faſted ſix days in the week, and
" whipped himſelf thrice a day, and was ſeven hours every day
" in vocal prayer upon the bare ground; and he ſhortly after
" had ſuch clear divine revelations, ſay his biographers, that in
" a moment of time he underſtood the greateſt myſteries of re-
" ligion, and the moſt ſubtle ſpeculations in philoſophy, eſpe-
" cially the way of God's making the world was made clear to
" him, but not ſo as he could expreſs it to others. In one of
" his extaſies, he continued eight days, in which, ſays his
" biographer, he ſaw the frame and model of the ſociety of the
" Jeſuits. He went a pilgrim to Jeruſalem; in returning
" through Spain, he was brought before a Spaniſh com-
" mander; now ſays his hiſtorian, it had been his cuſtom not
" to give men any titles of reſpect, but to call them only by
" their common names; and being brought before the com-
" mander, would not ſo much as take off his hat to him, &c. &c."

If the reader wiſhes to know more of this celebrated fana-tic, let him conſult, beſides Stillingfleet, Douglas's Criterion, from p. 69 to 75. Bayle's Dictionary, article Loyola, and Mr. Wharton's Enthuſiaſm of the Church of Rome demon-ſtrated, in obſervations on the life of Ignatius.

About the end of the 16th century, there aroſe in Savoy a ſect of enthuſiaſts who pretended to be prophets, and who af-terwards made many diſciples in London, where they were pa-tronized by Sir Richard Bulkeley, a man of ſome note and learning, on whom they had wrought a cure, which he con-ceived to be ſupernatural. A very particular and curious ac-count of them was publiſhed in 1709 at London, and annexed to the 4th edition of Dr. Hicke's Spirit of Enthuſiaſm exor-ciſed—it is entitled, "The New Pretenders to Prophecy exa-
" mined, and their Pretences ſhewn to be groundleſs and
" falſe," by N. Spinckes, M. A. This author gives a parti-cular account of their conduct, and quotes their own predic-tions. Theſe pretended ſaints, affected to ſpeak languages, when inſpired, of which, out of their extaſy, they declared themſelves incapable. But they were Hebrew, Greek, and

Latin

Latin, tongues unknown, and therefore uſeleſs to thoſe whom they addreſſed; nay, they declare, that they themſelves, when out of their extaſies and agitations, underſtood not what they ſaid in them. They ſpoke even thoſe languages barbarouſly, imperfectly, and almoſt unintelligibly, and improved as learners might be ſuppoſed to do; but what is moſt deciſive, they could not ſpeak the living tongue of the nation wherein they came to teach; the French prophets could not ſpeak Engliſh, nor the Engliſh, French. They alſo pretended, that miracles were wrought by them; but, of fifteen perſons whom they attempted to heal, they themſelves repreſent, that to the tumor of one a bladder was applied, and that it was dreſſed three or four times a day; that a ſecond was only beginning to recover; that five had received no benefit; a ſixth but little; a ſeventh no benefit at the time, though ſhe afterwards recovered. They alſo pretended to prophecy, but their prophecies were ſometimes of events of the moſt trifling nature, eaſily produced, and therefore eaſily foreſeen: as, when one is ſaid to tell them by inſpiration, "that there was a number of good people "at hand, who, in looking for the aſſembly, had loſt their way "in the woods or fields:" or, when rational conjecture might avail, as of the deaths of perſons in ſickneſs, or peculiar ſituations of danger, without however ſpecifying the particulars that ſhould attend them. Sometimes their miracles are plain frauds, as in the caſe of E. Gray, recited as above by Mr. Spinckes, p. 397. and in that of Mr. Lacy, 405. Some were antic tricks and ſtrange agitations, "falling flat upon the floor "at once like a board, &c. &c."

But the conſummation of their folly, as it was the period of their influence, was their celebrated prophecy of the reſurrection of Dr. Emes, which it was poſitively predicted, ſhould take place on the 25th of May, 1708, five months after his interment, publicly, by a miraculous power to be exerciſed by Mr. Lacy. This prophecy was pronounced repeatedly while the prophets underwent great agitations; but when the time came, and the city bands were placed around to prevent any diſturbance, no Mr. Lacy appeared, no reſurrection took place. Mr. Lacy publiſhed ſome fooliſh reaſons to account for the divine promiſe not being fulfilled, but, alas! they could not reſtore

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the credit of his ſect. I find they had alſo propheſied, that one " Stephen Halford, a cutler, at Birmingham, ſhould die on " February 3, 1707; that he ſhould lie in the ſame room for " three days, dead; that he ſhould then be buried, and twenty " days after riſe again."—The man who had been one of themſelves, and firmly believed the prediction, was thrown into great agitations—but the time paſſed, he did not die, and was ſo convinced of the deluſion as to forſake the ſect. They alſo propheſied, that within ſix months, from the 29th of October, 1707, London ſhould be deſtroyed.—I mention theſe circumſtances, to ſhew how apt enthuſiaſts will be to prophecy, and how certainly ſuch prophecy will deſtroy their credit. We have another inſtance of the raſhneſs of fanatics, as to prophecy, in the reveries of Brothers, who, in his revealed knowledge of the prophecies and times, p. 51. Dublin edition, 1795, in a paragraph, dated 1794, 1ſt of the month, called July, writes thus: " The Lord God ſaid to me among other things, in a viſion " early in the morning, for I had been earneſtly praying to " him the evening before, to haſten my revelation to the Jews, " and inform me how long it would be until it took place, be- " cauſe I was daily abuſed as an impoſtor for publiſhing his " commands, by wicked men, every one of them led on under " the influence of an evil ſpirit—You muſt be at *Conſtantinople*, " *in your way to Jeruſalem, by this time the next year*. I have raiſed " up one from the north, (meaning the revealed prince of the " Hebrews at this time), and he ſhall come, (meaning to Je- " ruſalem, from that northern part of the world alluded to), " (England lies in the north, and it is indeed the country " meant) from the riſing of the ſun he ſhall call upon my " name, and he ſhall come upon princes as upon mortar, and " as the potter treads clay, p. 61. Who hath declared from " the beginning, that we may know, and before the time, " (meaning the prophecy is fulfilled, it being 2461 years from " its declaration then to its *accompliſhment, now this preſent year of* " 1795) that we may ſay he is righteous, yea, there is none " that ſheweth, yea, there is none that declareth, yea, there " is none that heareth your words, ibid. The Lord God " commands me to ſay to you, Nathaniel Braſſey Halhed, that " as you are reviled, and conſidered by your former acquaint-

" ances

" ances as ruined and loſt for ſpeaking the truth, as he mani-
" feſted it to you, for publiſhing your teſtimony of me as his
" ſervant, *you ſhall, by the expiration of three months, from this day,*
" *have your choice, of being either governor-general of India, or preſi-*
" *dent of the Board of Controul in England,* that all men may be
" convinced, that he that rules in heaven, is able to exalt, or
" to abaſe; that he is ſtill able, even at this late hour of a
" wicked world, to reward the obedient to his bleſſed ſpirit, and
" give the moſt eminent places on earth to whomſoever he
" pleaſes," p. 65.

For a proof of the irregularity and uncertainty with which fanaticiſm produces its effects, conſult Douglas's Criterion, where he examines the pretended miracles performed at the tomb of the Abbe Paris, from p. 175 to 190. He remarks, that the cures when real, were wrought on perſons whoſe imaginations were ſtrongly impreſſed; that the applications were repeated, ſo that days and weeks, and even months intervened, between the firſt application and the relief. That they were of ſuch diſorders, as the imagination, and the force of nervous affections have particular influence upon; that the cures were attended with violent convulſions and agitations; that but a few of thouſands had been healed. I take no notice of the multitude of forgeries and frauds about theſe miracles, as I only conſider them ſo far as they were influenced by fanaticiſm. Vid. alſo Dr. Elrington on Miracles, from p. 232 to 245, and from p. 299 to the end. Vid. alſo Biſhop Douglas's Remarks on the Cure of the Evil, by the Royal Touch; where he ſtates the ſtrong probability, that even when ſuch cures were real, they were wrought by the force of imagination, p. 203. His account of the cures performed by Mr. Greatrakes, by ſtroaking with the hand, is well worth our notice. This perſon, a gentleman of ſome faſhion in the county of Waterford in Ireland, began 1662, to have a ſtrange perſuaſion in his mind, of which he was not able to give a rational account to others, that the gift of curing the king's evil was beſtowed upon him, and he afterwards attempted agues, and all ſorts of diſeaſes. But it muſt be obſerved, that many whom he was moſt anxious to heal, and who applied to him, he was unable to heal at all, as Lady Conway, whom he could not cure of a head-ach, though he

ſtayed

ſtayed at her houſe about three weeks or a month for that purpoſe—the cures were alſo effected gradually, and the operation of the hand frequently repeated. In many caſes there was occaſion to make uſe of razors and other ſharp inſtruments to lay open the ſores. The number of thoſe who received no benefit from him after repeated trials, greatly exceeded the number of thoſe who were relieved; and many who received benefit, received no cure, but afterwards relapſed. Vid. Douglas, from p. 205 to 212. On the cure of Madame de la Foſſe. Vid. Douglas, p. 230 to 233. it was gradual and imperfect. For a vindication of the miracles of our Lord from ſuch imputation, Vid. ibid. from p. 250 to 271. I hope, that in the preceding work, chap. 1. I have not omitted any material obſervation of this excellent writer; it is to be lamented that his work is now extremely ſcarce.

2dly. *The Conduct of Fanatics.*

P. 93. "Enthuſiaſts are overpowered by religious melancholy and abſtraction, devoted to exceſſive mortifications and fantaſtic penances, &c. They trample on the reſtraints of order and decency; are impatient to court perſecution, &c. are alienated from the relations and buſineſs of common life, &c."

P. 241. "Are frequently impatient of contradiction, and apt to perſecute, &c."

P. 220. "Have ſometimes indulged themſelves in vices, &c."

Vid. Beauſobre's Hiſtoire du Manichees. Liv. 2. chap. 3. p. 189. Amſterdam, 1734. "Manes, to give his errors a divine authority, having diſcovered in a ſolitary place a cave, which contained an excellent fountain, he concealed proviſions there, and then gave notice to his diſciples, that he was going to be exalted to heaven, where he would remain one year,

" year, at the end of which, he would return to find them. " He then ſhut himſelf up in his cave, and it was there in ſi- " lence and ſolitude that he formed his ſyſtem of philoſophy and " religion; and wrote his book, which he enriched with beau- " tiful figures, in order to embody his ſubtle imaginations with " a ſort of ſenſible and luminous body. In thus retiring to ſo- " litude, he imitated, ſays Beauſobre, his predeceſſor Zoroaſter, " who had uſed exactly the ſame artifice."

The Docetæ, before Manes, had maintained, that the word had only taken the exterior figure of a man. The Encratites had condemned marriage and the uſe of meats; theſe two hereſies were the natural conſequences of the falſe principle that matter, and by conſequence fleſh, was in itſelf evil, the Manicheans having adopted this principle, adopted theſe conſequences.

" Mahomet imitated Manes. God, ſays Abulfeda, chap. 7. " from his 25th to his 40th year, inſpired Mahomet with a love " of ſolitude; he lived retired, and paſſed one month in the grotto " of Mount Haram: in this retirement, in his 40th year, came " that night, in which, ſays the Arabian hiſtorian, God glori- " ous and ſupreme, honored him with the moſt diſtinguiſhed " honor.—Gabriel deſcended from heaven, and ſaid to him, " read—I know not how to read, ſaid Mahomet;—† read, ſays " the angel, in the name of God the Creator, who formed " man by uniting the ſexes. Read, in the name of the adora- " ble God: he taught man to avail himſelf of the pen: he " darts into his ſoul the ray of ſcience. Mahomet recited theſe " verſes, and advanced into the middle of the mountain, and " heard a heavenly voice, which repeated theſe words: Maho- " met, you are the apoſtle of God, and I am the angel Ga- " briel."—Such was the commencement and the proof of Mahomet's divine miſſion; but of this ſcene he was the only witneſs, and unable to produce any proof from miracles required to be believed on his word.

Brachmans. Bayle's Dictionary, Vol. I. p. 706.

" The Brachmans of Bengal lead a very auſtere life; they " go bare-headed and bare-footed in burning ſand, and live

† The firſt verſes of the Coran, chap. 96. Vid. Savary's tranſlation.

" only

" only upon herbs. They have very odd opinions about no-
" thingneſs; and a morality which has a great affinity with the
" viſions of our Quietiſts—they carry ſo far the apathia or in-
" differency to which they refer all holineſs, that a man muſt
" become a ſtone or a ſtatue to acquire the perfection of it."

Account of Darma, an enthuſiaſt of Japan. Vid. Kempfer's Hiſtory of Japan, Vol. II. 1ſt Appendix, p. 3. tranſlated by J. G. Schewickzer. Lond. 1727.

" About the year of Chriſt 519, this Darma came into Ja-
" pan; his deſign was to bring the inhabitants of that popu-
" lous country to the knowledge of God, and to preach his
" goſpel and religion to them, as the true and only one which
" would lead them to ſalvation; nor was it only with his doc-
" trine that he endeavoured to make himſelf uſeful to men,
" and acceptable to God; he went ſtill farther, and ſtrove
" for divine grace, by leading an auſtere and exemplary life;
" expoſing himſelf to all the injuries of the weather; chaſtiz-
" ing and mortifying his body, and ſubduing the paſſions of
" his mind; he lived only upon vegetables, and thought this to
" be the higheſt degree of holineſs to paſs days and nights in
" an uninterrupted *Satori*, that is, a contemplation of the di-
" vine Being; to deny all manner of reſt and relaxation to the
" body, and to conſecrate the mind entirely, and without in-
" termiſſion to God, was what he took to be the ſincereſt re-
" pentance, and the moſt eminent degree of perfection human
" nature could attain to. After a continued waking of many
" years, he at laſt grew ſo weary of his fatigues and faſting,
" that he fell aſleep. Awaking the next morning, and with
" ſorrow, remembering that he had broke his vow, he reſolved
" to take a ſincere repentance; and in the firſt place, leſt the
" like accident ſhould happen to him hereafter, he cut off both
" his eye-lids, as the inſtruments and miniſters of his crime,
" &c. &c."

Vid. the ſame author's account of the Jummabos, a religious order in Japan, who ſpend moſt of their time in going up and down holy mountains, waſhing themſelves in cold water in the midſt of winter, &c. Ib. vol. 1, b. 3, chap. v. p. 232.

Vid. Churchill's Collection of Voyages, Lond. 1704, vol. i. p. 533, and v. 2. p. 213, for Candidius's and Neuhof's Account

of

of the iſland of Formoſa, where the rites of religion are performed by women, who have tremblings and fits, when, as they conceive, their God ſpeaks to them.

Vid. alſo Churchill, ibid. vol. p. 230, for an account of Devotees in the kingdom of Achim, who ſpeak to nobody, practiſe the moſt unnatural geſticulations, and the greateſt ſeverities.

Vid. alſo Voyages de Corneille le Brun, par le Moſcovie, &c. printed at Amſterdam, 1718, tome 1, p. 13, for an account of the prieſts of the Samoyades, who, when conſulted upon futurity, never give their anſwer till they have been for a while, as it were, in a ſtate of death.

For an account of the ſeditious fanatics, who in the year 1525, roſe in Germany, and headed by the enthuſiaſt, Munzer, excited a religious, as well as a civil war, and ran into every act of violence and cruelty which rebellion and enthuſiaſm could ſuggeſt, Vid. Moſheim's Eccles. Hiſt. Cent, 16. chap. ii. ſect. 1. ſubj. 22.

In the year 1533, a number of anabaptiſts, who ſurpaſſed, "ſays Moſheim, the reſt of that fanatical tribe, in the extra-"vagance of their proceedings, the phrenzy of their diſordered "brains, and the madneſs of their pretenſions and projects, ap-"peared at Munſter in Weſtphalia. They gave themſelves out "for the meſſengers of heaven, inveſted with a divine com-"miſſion, to lay the foundation of a new government, a holy "and ſpiritual empire, and to deſtroy all temporal rule and "authority, all human and political inſtitutions. They began "to erect a new republic, and under the title of new Jeruſalem, "committed the adminiſtration of it to John Bockhott a "Taylor of Leyden. Vid. Moſh. Eccles. Hiſt. Cent. 16. chap. iii. ſect. 1, ſubj. 10. vol. 4, p. 102, tranſlated by Maclaine, Lond. 1782, and Cent. 16, ſect. 3, part 2, chap. iii. ib. p. 439.

The Abbe Paris (at whoſe tomb thoſe pretended miracles were wrought. which Mr. Hume compares with the miracles of the goſpel) mortified himſelf with continual faſtings, ſold his eſtate, buried himſelf in an obſcure retirement, tore himſelf with the moſt cruel flagellations, and finally brought on his own death, by obſtinately abſtaining from food. Vid. Douglas's Criterion, p. 123.

Monſieur

Monſieur Montgeron, who defended the cauſe of the Abbe, was a ſingular enthuſiaſt; he conceived himſelf inſpired at the tomb of the Abbe by a ſudden inſpiration. "Having writ-" ten his narrative of theſe ſuppoſed miracles, and deter-" mined to preſent it to the king in perſon, he for eight days " before he did ſo, lay on a bed of aſhes; bread and water was " his only ſuſtenance, and the whole period was ſpent in devo-" tion. He did not take the leaſt pains to eſcape the impriſon-" ment, which he knew was determined againſt him, on ac-" count of this book; but waited in his houſe with a kind of " impatience for the Lettre de Cachet." Vid. Douglas's Criterion, p. 220 to 223. and Dr. Elrington's Sermons on Miracles, from 237 to 240. and the notes 340.

The French prophets were guilty of * breach of faith; † they took up arms againſt their ſovereign; ‡ they deſtroyed houſes and churches; § they undermined the authority of the ſcripture, and ‖ they manifeſted the moſt exceſſive rage, and employed the moſt abuſive terms againſt the clergy. ¶ They alſo decryed human learning as wholly uſeleſs and pernicious, and ſuperſeded by the inſpiration they enjoyed.

For an account of the celebrated fanatic of Florence, Girolano Savanarola, conſult Guiccardini's Hiſtory, book 2 and 3, or Mr. Roſcoe's Life of Lorenzo de Medici, vol. 2, p. 158—238—266, &c. He told the citizens of Florence that he had himſelf been the ambaſſador of the Florentines to heaven, and that Chriſt had condeſcended to be their peculiar monarch, and that the legiſlative power ought to be extended to the citizens at large. On the defeat and execution of the adherents to the family of the De Medici, which Savanarola inſtigated, Florence aſſumed the appearance of a theocracy, of which he was the prophet, the legiſlator, and the judge. Domenico, one of his principal diſciples, in a conteſt with the Franciſcan friars, tranſported with zeal for the intereſts of his maſter, propoſed to confirm the truth of his doctrines by walking through the flames, provided any of his adverſaries would ſubmit to a ſimilar teſt: ſuch was the enthuſiaſm of the moment, one of the Franciſcans accepted the challenge; the com-

* Vid. Spinckes, ut ſupra, p. 450. † Ib. 451. ‡ Ib. 464.
§ Ib. 470. ‖ Ib. 472. ¶ 468.

buſtibles

buſtibles were prepared; Savanarola and his champion appeared, thundering with a tremendous voice, the pſalm, "*Exſurgat Deus, & Diſſipentur Inimici ejus;*" but finding the Franciſcan was not to be deterred, either by his vociferations, or the ſight of the flames, he had recourſe to another expedient; and inſiſted that his champion Domenico, when he entered the fire, ſhould bear the hoſt along with him; this ſacrilegious propoſal ſhocked the whole aſſembly; it deſtroyed the credit of Savanarola, he was dragged to priſon, and afterwards put to the torture: here he acknowledged the folly of his pretenſions to ſupernatural aid, and with his champion Domenico, and another attendant, was firſt ſtrangled, and then committed to the flames. Savanarola was much addicted to prophecy; he predicted degradation and baniſhment to Lorenzo de Medici, which never took place, &c. &c.

3dly. *The ſtile of fanatical writings.*

P. 126.—"Obſcurity and extravagance, ſelf-"exaltation and uncharitableneſs, are the natural "characters of enthuſiaſtic compoſitions.—The ſtile "is full of myſterious and metaphorical alluſions.—"Common events are ſpoken of as ſecret Provi-"dences; uncommon, as decided miracles, &c.

For ſpecimens of this, for I do not chooſe to tranſcribe them, my reader may, if he pleaſes, conſult Stillingfleet, as quoted above, p. 99; for the Myſticiſm of St. Juliana, and the myſtical language of Sancta Sophia, vid. Ludovicus Bloſſius, in his ſpiritual inſtitutions, &c. &c. and conſult Stillingfleet, ut ſupra, p. 124 to 132, where he will find abundance about abſtractedneſs of life—mental prayers—paſſive unions—a deiform ſund of the ſoul—a ſtate of introverſion—of the ſoul's being in a vacuity, and receiving God in the pure fund of the ſpirit—of the ſimple eſſence of the ſoul being ſtamped with a divine impreſſion, from whence ariſeth a ſupereſſential life, &c. and if the reader wiſhes for an example of the language of the quietiſts, I give it him in the words of Bruyere and Madame Guyon, as quoted by Bayle—"I deſire you to obſerve, ſays

Bayle, that this monſter of indifferency is the darling doctrine of the quietiſts, and that according to them the true felicity conſiſts in nothingneſs. He then quotes from Bruyere—"Then in the three-fold ſilence of words, thoughts and deſires, "finding himſelf in a ſpiritual ſleep, in a myſtical drunkenneſs, "all the ſuſpended powers are recalled from the circumference "to the centre. God, who is that centre, makes the ſoul feel "him by divine touches, by a taſte, by illapſes, by unſpeakable "ſuavities;" and the words of Madame Guyon—"a ſpiritual "ſoul ought to be indifferent in all things, either for the body "or the ſoul, or for temporal or eternal goods, and leave "what is paſt in forgetfulneſs, and things to come to the Pro-"vidence of God, and not to enjoy the preſent, &c. &c."

Vid. the ſtrange opinion of certain Grecian Myſtiques about the poſſibility of a man (ſcil. a ſaint) receiving and poſſeſſing the very entire ſubſtance of the Holy Spirit—Beauſobre's Hiſtoire de Manichees, &c. part 2, liv. 1, chap. ii. in fine, p. 268. For further examples of myſticiſm conſult the writings of Jacob Behmen, whoſe diſciples acknowledge, or rather glory, that they are unintelligible. Vid. Arnold Hiſt. Theologiæ Myſticæ, p. 592.

4thly. *The Doctrines of Fanatics, particularly their moral Doctrines.*

Supra, P. 220. "Enthuſiaſts teach men to ſeek "and pray for ſecret illuminations, &c." "Moral "rectitude and practical piety are deſpiſed or under-"valued"—"hence the vices in which fanatics "have ſometimes indulged themſelves, &c.—"they "ſeldom exhort to ſober ſelf-government, ſeldom "enforce the duties of ſocial life."

P. 225.—"They are prone to believe they have "already attained the ſummit of moral perfection."

P. 227.—"They deſpiſe external helps to religion."

P. 236.

P. 236.—" Fanaticiſm has generally carried with " it a levelling principle in political affairs."

P. 241.—" Fanatics are ſevere in condemning " thoſe who differ from them."

P. 273.—" The devotion of fanatics is gloomy and " extravagant;—their principles of ſocial conduct " unnatural;—their ideas of ſelf-regulation harſh and " unpracticable, &c."

Of the principles of the myſtic theology among the Chriſtians, which was derived from the fanaticiſm of the modern platonics, Vid. Moſheim de Reb. Chriſtianis ante Conſtant. p. 314. He gives this account from Philo—" The ſoul riſing " above every perceivable exiſtence, or ſenſible eſſence, is " ſeized with the love of the ſpiritual world, and having con- " templated in that the patterns and ideas of the ſenſible ob- " jects which it here beholds, and the admirable beauties of " theſe ideas, it is hurried away by a ſober intoxication, and, " like the Corybantes, full of inſpiration, is then captivated by " another far more exalted love, by which, raiſed to the ſum- " mit of all intelligence, it ſeems to tend to the ſupreme king, " and then upon the ſoul deſirous of contemplating it, is " poured a pure and unmixed ray of light like a torrent, ſo " that the eye of the ſoul is overpowered by its ſplendor, &c. " &c."

Of the riſe of the Aſcetics, who adopted, as means of perfection, watching, abſtinence from wine, fleſh and marriage, and who would not engage in commerce, Vid. Moſheim Eccl. Hiſt. Cent. 2d, part 2d, chap. 3d, they derived their rules from the fanatical diſcipline of the modern platonics. It is remarkable, that they were the firſt Chriſtians who uſed pious frauds. Vid. Bingham's Antiquities of the Chriſtian Church, b. 7, chap. i. Ib. chap. ii. It is worthy of notice, that, according to Bingham, " the Aſcetics were men of an active life, " living in cities as other men, differing only in this, that they " were more intent and zealous in attempting greater heights " and heroical acts of virtue.—It was not till the 4th century " that monks aroſe, who retired from the buſineſs and conver-

" ſation of the world, for they either lived in cells by them-
" ſelves, or in monaſteries, in mountains and wilderneſſes—ſome
" ſpending years ſtanding on the top of pillars, &c. &c.
" Bingham notices the Sarabaitæ, an order of monks, who
" did not, like the others, retire to the wilderneſs, but lived
" chiefly in cities and caſtles, where every thing they did
" might be ſeen and valued of men.—They faſted to an extra-
" ordinary degree; but if ever there came a feaſt day, they
" indulged in riot and exceſs." Bing. b. 7, chap. ii. ſect. 4.

For a more full account conſult Moſheim de Rebus Chriſtianorum ante Conſtantinum, Sæculum Secundum, ſect. 35, p. 310.

Montanus was one of the moſt remarkable and the earlieſt enthuſiaſts in the Chriſtian church;—he gave himſelf out as the immediate organ of the Paraclete or Comforter;—he pretended that Chriſt and his apoſtles, to indulge the infirmities of men, had left an imperfect ſyſtem of morality;—he added great auſterities;—he looked upon it as criminal to fly from perſecution;—he was a declared enemy to philoſophy, arts, and learning. For an account of the Montaniſts, conſult Moſheim's Eccles. Hiſt. Cent. 2d part 2. chap. v. Euſeb. Eccles. Hiſt. b. 5. chap. xvi. and indeed all the writers of the early ſects, eſpecially Moſheim de Reb. Chriſ. ante Conſtantinum Sec. 2um. ſect. 66, and a Hiſtory of Montaniſm by Mr. Lee, annexed to the 4th edition of Dr. Hickes's Spirit of Enthuſiaſm Exorciſed, printed in Lond. 1709. This is a very full and curious, and ſeems to be a very candid treatiſe.

Montanus had amongſt his followers two women, Maximilla and Priſcilla, who uttered prophecies with agitations and convulſions. They propheſied calamities to the Roman empire, and the conſummation of all things to follow their deaths.

Moſheim in his Eccles. Hiſt. cent. 12, par. 2, chap. v. " tells us, that a number of fanatics at that period infeſted the " Greek and Eaſtern churches—who profeſſed to believe in a " double Trinity, rejected wedlock, abſtained from fleſh, treated " with the utmoſt contempt the ſacrament of baptiſm, and " the Lord's ſupper, as alſo all the various branches of external " worſhip, and placed the eſſence of religion in internal " prayer alone, &c."

Stillingfleet

Stillingfleet ut ſupra, p. 100, quotes abundant authorities to prove that St. Benedict was a hater of human learning.—" He " remained three years in a cave abſorbed in devotion;—he " conquered his carnal deſires, by rolling himſelf naked among " thorns and nettles. St. Francis, whoſe father had confined " him with dark rooms and chains, but on finding no amend- " ment, at length diſcharged him, when St. Francis (ſays Bo- " naventure) ſtripped himſelf ſtark naked, and ſaid thus to " his father, " *hitherto I called thee father on earth; but henceforward* " *I can ſurely ſay, our Father which art in heaven;* as if, adds " Stillingfleet, his duty to God and his parents had been in- " conſiſtent."—Bernard, who joined him, opened the goſpel three times, and the firſt three ſentences he ſaw were to be the rule of their order.

For inſtances of enthuſiaſm favouring vice, conſult what Stillingfleet proves of the mendicant friars, and the *Evangelium Æternum*, publiſhed by them, A. D. 1254, p. 105.

Of their moſt innocent opinions, one was, that the New Teſtament was to continue in force only ſix years from that time. —That there were none fit to inſtruct the people who did not go barefoot;—that Chriſt and his apoſtles were not perfect in the contemplative life;—that the order of the clergy ſhall periſh, &c. &c. &c.

Of the doctrines of the Beguini, the Fratricelli, and the Beguardi, who aroſe in Narbonne, in the time of Clement V. and whoſe leader was Petrus Johannes, Stillingfleet gives this account.—Their doctrines may be reduced to four heads—

1ſt. Evangelical poverty. They ſaid that the apoſtles had nothing proper or in common, becauſe they were perfectly poor, and that the enjoying any thing, though in common, takes off from the perfection of it, &c. &c.

2d. They maintained the abſolute unlawfulneſs of ſwearing.

3dly. The doctrine of perfection—which was " that a man " in this life may attain to ſo great perfection, as to live with- " out ſin;—that a man who hath attained to ſuch a degree is " above ordinances, i. e. he need not faſt and pray as others " do;—that ſuch as are perfect have the ſpirit of liberty, and " are not ſubject to human ordinances, either of church or " ſtate;—that every intellectual being hath enough within itſelf

" to

" to make it happy, or a light within, ſo that it doth not need " any external light of glory in order thereto;—that to live in " the exerciſe of moral virtues, is an argument of a ſtate of " imperfection, and that one truly perfect is above them; from " hence they accounted all actions which were deſigned to " ſatisfy natural inclinations to be indifferent, and ſo looked on " unclean mixtures as no ſins.—The Beguardi ſometimes ſaid, " that a perfect ſoul being reduced to God loſeth its own will, " which being ſuppoſed, they ſay, they may do any thing which " their affection puts them upon without ſin, becauſe they have " no will of their own, &c."

" Not very diſſimilar to theſe were the Pſeudo Apoſtolici in " Italy, in the end of the thirteenth century, who went up and " down in the ſtreets barefooted, and what they eat was pub- " licly, and only what was given them. The pope Boniface " the VIII. inſtituted a cruſade againſt them;—they were with " great difficulty ſubdued, for they bore all extremities of " hunger and cold in the Alps rather than yield.—They main- " tained that they only were the church of God;—that no one " can be ſaved who is not of their order;—that no layman " ought to pay tithes to prieſt or prelate, who lives not in the " ſame perfection and poverty which the apoſtles did, &c. &c.

In the beginning of the ſixteenth century aroſe another ſect of enthuſiaſts in Spain, named Alumbrados and Illuminati. Spondanus gives this account of them, " that under the pre- " tence of mental prayer and divine contemplation, and union " with God, they deſpiſed the uſe of ſacraments, of preaching, " the ſcriptures, and all holy exerciſes, and did extol the others " ſo highly, that by this means they ſaid that would not be ſin " in them which was ſo in others, and by this means they " committed impurities."

For inſtances of the immoralities of fanatics, Vid. Bayle's Dictionary, Article Priſcelliani—notes.

LEAST

LEAST my young readers ſhould be miſled by the eloquent, but groſsly partial repreſentation, which Hume has given of the firſt reformers from popery, to rank them with the fanatics who, in other periods, have diſturbed Chriſtianity, I beg leave to tranſcribe a ſingle paragraph from Dr. Maclaine's 1ſt Appendix, inſerted in Moſheim's Eccles. Hiſt. of Cent. 16, chap. iv. end of 1ſt ſect.—"The principal reformers were Luther, Zuing-"lius, Calvin, Melanchton, Bucer, Martyr, Bullinger, Beza, "Œcolampadius, and others. Now theſe were all men of "learning, who came forth into the field of controverſy (in "which the fate of future ages, with reſpect to liberty, was to "be decided) with a kind of arms that did not at all give "them the aſpect of perſons agitated by the impulſe, or ſeduced "by the deluſions of fanaticiſm, They pretended not to be "called to the work they undertook by viſions, or internal il-"luminations and impulſes; they never attempted to work "miracles, nor pleaded a divine commiſſion; they taught no "new religion; nor laid claim to any extraordinary vocation; "they reſpected government, practiſed and tanght ſubmiſſion "to civil rulers, and defired only the liberty of that conſcience "which God has made free; they maintained that the faith of "Chriſtians was to be determined by the word of God alone; "they had recourſe to reaſon and argument, to the rules of "ſound criticiſm, and to the authority and light of hiſtory; "they tranſlated the ſcriptures into the popular languages of "different countries, and appealed to them as the only teſt of "religious truth; they exhorted Chriſtians to judge for them-"themſelves, to ſearch the ſcriptures, to break aſunder the "bonds of ignorant prejudice and lawleſs authority, and to "aſſert that liberty of conſcience, to which they had an una-"lienable right as reaſonable beings.

FINIS.

ERRATA.

Page 9, line 16, for *Nathaniel*, read Nathanael.
16, laſt line, for *Nazarites*, read Nazarenes.
124, line 3, for *unparalled*, read unparalleled.
130, line 9, before blindneſs, inſert their.
141, line 10, for *Nazareth*, read Nazarene.
149, line 20, for *ſubject*, read ſubjects.
155, line 15, for *univerſally*, read unavoidably.
156, line 23, for *end*, read ends.
158, line 12, before viſions, inſert the.
185, line 2, for *Coloſſi*, read Coloſſe.
221, line 1, for *deverſified*, read diverſified.
265, line 10, for *themſelves*, read themſelves.
316, line 25, for *of an event*, read or of an event.
317, line 32, for *μανται*, read *μαντια*.